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ARTIST IN MANHATTAN

**ARTIST
IN MANHATTAN**

**BY
JEROME MYERS**

AMERICAN ARTISTS GROUP, INC. NEW YORK

ARTIST IN MANHATTAN
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A. A. V.

To My Wife and Daughter,
ETHEL and VIRGINIA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to record my grateful appreciation to two friends, Samuel Golden who convinced me that I ought to write this book; and to Bernard Hoffman, for his stimulating suggestions and for his painstaking editing of the manuscript.

J. M.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is the third volume in a series of books designed to become an invaluable concurrent record of those distinguished artists who by their lives and achievements are contributing to a genuinely native American Renaissance.

Too often have the lives and teachings of our great artists been left for their recording and interpretation to subsequent generations—to be reconstructed somehow, at farthest remove from every living source. The American Artists Group now undertakes to correct this condition by creating an authoritative parallel literature that will round out and enrich the contributions which the significant artists of the present day are making.

It seems highly important to us that the artist be given the opportunity of recording his convictions; even though his opinions in relation to his own experiences and his own work may prove faulty to a degree and may not be borne out by future evaluations.

The undertaking of this library was no accident or caprice. It originated from a need—actual, vital, measurable. Among other varied activities which it has pursued since its organization in 1935, the American Artists Group has conducted traveling art exhibitions in hundreds of communities. From this nation-wide contact, the Group has come face to face with America's artistic awakening in its most compelling reality.

Each volume is to be of a highly individualized character, embodying the unique spirit of its subject. This variety within the unifying framework of the series as a whole is exemplified in two volumes already issued. In "Gist of Art," John Sloan sets forth, with architectural clarity and terse illumination, the principles and the technique which have animated his long and illustrious career as artist and teacher. "And He Sat Among the Ashes" is William Schack's dramatic narrative of the life of Louis M. Eilshemius, the artist who clamored in vain through half a century for a fraction of that recognition which finally came too late.

"Artist in Manhattan" carries forward the publisher's intention that each volume shall be characteristically different. In this book, Jerome Myers records his development as man and artist among those now passing scenes of the metropolis which his works have already made imperishable. In depicting his life, his attitude towards art and his relations with contemporaries, the author provides an invaluable complement to the reproductions of his works.

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ARTIST IN MANHATTAN

PROLOGUE

Like shaking the dice to see what numbers come up, I shake my memory for name or incident. An artist's life is a gamble. Calculations are useless for both the outcome and the income. The artist is adrift on a raft, at the mercy of unknown currents; he may make for safety or flounder among the rocks. Yet it is amazing how many men, within my own observation, have made some port or otherwise have sustained themselves in one way or another . . . Years pass, and out of obscurity I meet an artist, an almost forgotten friend of my youth; the current that had borne him out of sight has carried him back again within my vision.

Surely in the thoroughfares of our imagination, there can be many meetings, dim in shadowy retrospect, with those whose fate we have pondered over, with those who have sailed away, far out of our lives; their friendship or enmity lost among the regrets that time brings, the factual records that could accent the retrospect becoming submerged, as the tide carries us all to a common shore. On that shore are our buried hopes. Buried there also are the aspirations of the idealists, their unfinished visions cut off by fate, over which the wind moans so gently—the same visions to be dreamt anew by those who still travel onward along the boundaries of human thought.

In this book of my memories in relation to art, the outward facts of my life will be but a bare framework for the impressions that affected me as an artist, for the persons who had to do with my progress, for my feelings about the pictures I have painted

of the people of New York City, where I have spent most of my life. Lacking a diary to guide me, I shall limit myself to sketching in outline my progressive identity in time and place, more often letting the remembered sequence take precedence over chronology.

As the subject of an autobiography, I find myself elusive, hidden under art conditions. Surely I had to eat and pay rent, and experienced vicissitudes; but to dramatize personal and family incidents, artfully to make capital of real or fancied injustice to swell this account of my memories, is beyond the bounds of my intention and my ability. No more would I date my pictures. I ask only that my life, my work be taken *en bloc* from the sum total of these impressions.

These reflections combine for me the past and the present—what has been and is, in humble resumé. To abler writers I leave the history that is more comprehensive, that dates and classifies events catching them by the tail before they run away. With me, memory must take pot luck. The song of my work is a simple song of the poor, far from the annals of the rich. Unlike Delacroix's, my pen cannot dip into aristocratic French ink, adorable as it may be.

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH

My family background happens to be a rather atmospheric one. I was born in Petersburg, Virginia, in 1867. In my early childhood my parents migrated to the North, where my early years were divided among several states, until we finally settled in Trenton, New Jersey. It was at about the age of five that incidents began to register. I remember going up a lane in a suburb of Trenton to a little schoolhouse—whether it was red, I cannot recall—where an old man taught us and fed chickens between lessons, chopping up the mash with an axe. That axe simply petrified me.

To go briefly into my family history, my paternal grandfather was born in Paris of Dutch descent. He became a professional soldier under Napoleon, attaining the rank of major. Later he went to England, where my father was born. Together with several brothers, my grandfather subsequently came to America and fought in the war of 1812. Family legend has it that he was given a veteran's land grant, comprising the present site of Fulton Market in Manhattan, as well as land in Jacksonville, Florida. The only definite evidences I know of were a family lawsuit and a missing uncle who left us in the lurch and freed Jacksonville from our claim. My grandfather settled in Richmond, Virginia. According to report, he must have been a colorful personality; tall and of

military bearing, with an impressive aspect. It is said that when he was already ninety years old, during the Civil War, he managed to get into some trouble with Grant's army for having criticized its military tactics.

My father was of an independent, roving disposition. While still a boy, he had run away from home—the start of a wanderlust that was to last throughout his life. I learned that he went to California in the days of the gold rush, and lived there among the Spaniards, becoming known as Francesco Mayer. It was further known that he acquired a gold mine, which he worked for some years but which later passed out of his hands, to become the Cleopatra Mine that yielded a rich annual harvest to the Proctor estate. I also know that my father travelled to many lands, making himself at home in different countries and meeting many important men. He would reappear at home after long intervals. I can recall one of his homecomings. I was about ten, and my father had been away for five years. He came home carrying a fish on a string; in a casual way he asked about mother, adding that we would have fish for supper. My mother had a cheerful philosophy; she took both the fish and the husband back within the home circle. My father wandered away again; how soon after that, I do not remember. Altogether, we were five children, one girl and four boys. My memory does not serve me too well in the details of this period. Yet whatever they were, I can understand how natural it was that in an environment of this kind, the children should scatter prematurely, going off in different directions as they grew up.

In 1876, the year of the Centennial Exposition, we moved to West Philadelphia, within walking distance of the Philadelphia Exposition Grounds. The house next to us was rented to a Chinese Commissioner, who had a group of Chinese artists making exquisite carvings for the Exposition. Being a child neighbor I had

entrée to their workshop. I know not what dormant feelings for art might have been unconsciously evoked as I watched the delicate work day after day. Our conversation was limited to pidgin English. The Commissioner, who was a tall handsome mandarin, wore American clothes for only one day, during which his watch was stolen, causing him to revert to his beautiful Chinese costume. On an open lot adjoining our home, the great Forepaugh Circus, which was later merged with Barnum's, annually pitched its tents. To me this was a great thrill. Whether I looked from without, through a hole in the tent, or saw the show from inside, I cannot remember; but I do recall it as the Great Event. Of all the acts, the acrobats impressed me most. I know they inspired me to walk on my hands and to hang from my toes, performances which gained me a local reputation, with requests to exhibit my skill.

In my childish romanticism, the beautiful circus lady, in a star-spangled dress and on a white horse, struck deeply responsive chords. As she went 'round and 'round the ring, she nearly nullified the impression of the Chinese carvers, who, as I have told, were my first artistic inspiration. Then, when the circus had gone, our gang of children made caves in the lot and cooked strange little meals out of materials made up by forays to our respective kitchens. We took the tone of pirates, tried to look like hoboes. A star in blue was pricked on each member's left hand, a mark I still show. These were the wild and woolly days of my childhood.

Then came an event that brushed all these associations aside, dethroning the beautiful equestrienne, the acts of the marvelous acrobats. The event that thus put my feet back on solid earth was the burning down of our house, with all the family treasures, including the gifts of beautiful carvings from our neighbor the Chinese mandarin. More serious, however, was the fact that my mother was compelled to go to a hospital; with the result that,

the whereabouts of my father being unknown, the rest of the family was dispersed and I was sent to a Methodist home. This was a radical change in atmosphere. A reformed would-be circus boy was dragged out of his pirate's den and clapped into an institution.

In the morning, we brushed our teeth and filed in for prayers. Then, after breakfast at the unforgettable long tables, we went to the class room. Boys and girls were together there, but my chivalry towards girls seemed to be dormant; perhaps the pirate taint was still persistent. It happened once that I had a wordy quarrel with the little girl next to me, for which the teacher reproved me. This incident led to the first flicker of the tender passion that I can remember. A little later, the teacher, a beautiful young woman with auburn hair, asked us all to write a composition on our little slates. Her hair wove its threads of gold around my little heart. Full of remorse for my bad behavior toward my little schoolmate, I composed an apology. When the teacher came to my slate, she asked me to stand up, then inquired if I had written the piece myself. In fear and trembling I said, "Yes". Then she took me in her arms and gave me a kiss I have never forgotten. The school-room became a miniature paradise.

Another incident was an argument with a little boy about something I cannot remember. What I recall is that the matron slapped him and not me, and that after thinking the quarrel over, it seemed to me that the matron had shown partiality. I reasoned that I was equally at fault and should also have been slapped; my idea of justice was violated. So I went to the matron and argued punishment for myself, the same as the other boy had received. However, instead of giving me the slap that I felt was my due, she gave me a kiss for my little lecture on ideal justice.

The result left my fundamental idea up in the air. Yet this basic idea of justice remained of great concern to me, becoming the

germ of a personal religion. I could not imagine a Heavenly Father as unjust as humans, slapping one and not another. I went to the Bible, thought and studied until my Methodism began to crumble and my creed to lose its boundaries. Then I read still more, following clue after clue, seeking for a solution to this mysterious division of opinion—a research in which, as I recall, Herbert Spencer figured largely. My earnest inquiries of the matron were treated with humorous evasions; but these thoughts, engendered in that Methodist home, made me a serious student of religion. Later on, as a result of this unguided quest, which followed from a natural inclination, I attained a fairly good idea of comparative religions and their evolution.

There was but moderate payment for our upkeep. A board of trustees made occasional visits and gave donations. When they came, we were all shined up, to make us presentable. On Sunday mornings, we were led out of the home on our way to Sunday school. In line formation, we paraded down a quiet Philadelphia street; our gray capes, with the red flannel lining thrown over one shoulder, giving us the appearance of little cadets. In Sunday school my heart was filled with religious fervor. The ex-pirate became a near-fanatic. The embossed cards that were given for merit were treasures of beauty. Christmas came and we formed in line to go to the nursery, where the large Christmas tree stood with its wonderful trimmings and heaps of presents for us all. All the primeval enthusiasm of childhood tingled in my every vein, and with all my heart and all my voice I joined in the singing of the holy songs.

As time went on, I was taken with the urge to do some carving and drawing. To me, a pencil naturally suggested not only writing but drawing as well; just as in the same way, a book was not merely something to read but something to select for subject. I had access to the matron's library. "The Story of Undine," a German story

of a water spirit, fascinated me—I remember rereading it when I was sixteen and finding it as lovely still. Other books, remembered, were a book of history and, of course, the Holy Bible.

A year passed and I was back with my mother. Our home was on Passyunk Avenue, and I went to public school on Carpenter Street. At this time I was reading the lurid dime novels, which engrossed me. One day I was curled up against a fence, mentally out in the wild west with Deadwood Dick. It was just before the school hour. My teacher, happening to pass by, called out to me not to be late for school. Thus to be brought back to real life irritated me so much that I gave her a gruff answer. For this I was brought to trial before the principal and the teachers. Like Patrick Henry, I defended my liberty, although my lack of politeness could not be justified. I claimed that the teacher had no jurisdiction out of school, and with a certain flow of gab that I naturally possessed, I escaped a reprimand.

Tapping my memory, I remember that when I was eleven I left the public school I had been attending in Philadelphia and took a necessary job as a bundle boy for a dollar store. Not long afterwards, I was to realize the dignity of a job away from home altogether. At Second and Arch Streets, near a great Quaker meeting house, there was a saloon, with a soda fountain in the front corner. Here I was to serve drinks to the public. On the fountain, under glass, was a little classical figure over which water ran continuously. I lodged and boarded with my employer, going home only on Sundays, when I saw my invalid mother and had the joy of giving her the two dollars which was my weekly salary. My employer, John Daly, was a very stout man, of the old school. In fair weather he would always sit outside the saloon. I rather think he was a man of influence, in his own way. Friends would keep coming along, hailing him with, "John, come in and have a drink." In that City of Brotherly Love, John never refused. Passing my soda

fountain with the classic virgin in her ceaseless bath, they would go farther inside for something stronger.

However, I was not to remain a soda dispenser for very long. Whatever may have been the reason for my departure from John Daly's saloon, memory picks me up on another scene, working in a cork factory on Front Street near the Delaware River. There it was a favorite diversion to place new boys into a large steaming vat for heating cork. Also, one had to be careful not to run one's elbows against the circular knives—which I did; as well as not to cut one's fingers off on the great tapering knives—which I nearly did also. Saving up my pennies, I made a weekly visit to Wood's Museum, which had a little theatre where I saw my first stage play. The glamor of the theatre fired my childish mind. I can still remember the beautiful star and her name, Lily Hinton; even at twelve, I thought of writing plays for the divine Lily—my earliest literary yearning.

Finally the cork dust at the factory palled on me, or possibly—I don't know—malnutrition began to have its effect; for I remember being carted away in an ambulance to a hospital in Germantown, where I enjoyed the distinction for three months of being the youngest patient. Shortly after leaving the hospital, I began a somewhat gentler life. I found work with a conveyancer, for whom my duties consisted principally of opening and closing the little one-story brick office and taking advertisements to the *Public Ledger*. For the rest of the time, I had my employer's library at my disposal. Lempriere's Classical Dictionary and a Webster's Unabridged opened up for me what amounted to a literary heaven. Between these two books, I found out what the Greek philosophers had to say, which became the basis of my later study of comparative history. My employer must have approved of my studies, or else he believed in the wisdom of silence, for he said nothing. At that time I was fortunate in having no supervisor to direct my

studies, being simply a free lance, as I was to become in other directions later on. However, I loved lurid fiction also. Deadwood Dick, who killed Indians with the greatest of ease, and other stories of horror curdled my youthful blood, keeping it in that state until the next installment. I remember once giving a girl cousin—behind her family's back, of course—the adventures of "Skinny, the Tin Peddler." The stage, too, continued to fascinate me. As a special event, I went to see "Hamlet," played by Creston Clarke, a nephew of Edwin Booth. In that performance I saw also an unforgettable Ophelia, who I was happy to learn years later was a reigning beauty in London.

About my fourteenth year, through the enterprise of an elder brother, the family moved to Baltimore, which was as near as I was ever again to come to my native Virginia. My stay in Baltimore lasted about four years. There were many things I did there for a living. Among them, I remember selling writing paper and envelopes on the oyster boats in Chesapeake Bay. Indistinctly, I recall making the rounds of the cabins, in one of which I tried to convince a drunken oyster fisherman that he write to someone dear to him at home. Perhaps, on these voyages of inducement, many a letter was sent for which some wife or sweetheart had me to thank. Subsequently, I was claimed by the markets of Baltimore, where my work began at three in the morning, making early hours a necessarily fixed habit. It was an invigorating life, though in many an early dawn I shivered in my shanks.

I acquired some picturesque friends. There was, for instance, a man named Root, who sold cough drops by the wagonful and who happened to be of a philosophical tendency. We had many discussions, in which my study of Lemprière's Classical Dictionary, perused during my former employment at the conveyancer's office, served me in good stead. Mr. Root had the more practical philosophy. Years later, I met him on 14th Street, in New York,

selling lavender, old and alone. There was also a fine-looking, vigorous man who had run away with a Brooklyn sheriff's wife and her crippled son. She was still beautiful, but their family quarrels scarcely suggested romance. However, her sweetheart had a kindly word for what art work of mine I showed him, and an impressive power of prediction. I remember becoming friendly also with another market man, a little rotund fellow who sold butter, to whom I showed some of my drawings in pencil and water-color and whose apparent appreciation was inspiring.

It was as a result of my experience in the public markets of Baltimore that I first approached the threshold of art, then finally crossed over and entered. Above the market was the Baltimore School of Fine Arts. Perhaps it was that I looked picturesque or that I just happened to be conveniently at hand—at any rate, I was asked to pose before the elegant-looking young ladies and gentlemen of the art class. It was a quiet place, with the antique statues adding to the silence—to me a charmed world, my first glimpse of a career in art that was never to be forgotten.

It was also in Baltimore that another diversion, involving my skill with pencil and brush, had an influence on my development. My oldest brother, always resourceful, thought up a way to help our family finances. Like our father, he had been home only at intervals. He had been in the theatrical business, and some flop or other on the road had brought him home again. He suggested a partnership with me. I would paint signs and he would get the orders for them. Thus, without ever before having seen a sign shop, I was soon painting away. Across the way from our home was an old disused Universalist church, which my brother rented for our business. Here, for a year or so, I had my shingle out and we flourished. Incidentally, I remember contracting lead poisoning at this time. Now I know that the lead finally left my system, but the paint remained.

II

I COME TO NEW YORK

In 1886, my brother's enterprise brought our family to New York. I was then about eighteen. Before we left Baltimore, my brother had me do some writing on a comedy drama. It was produced here in New York, but flopped. I remember this incident very well because the suit of clothes bought for the leading man fitted me beautifully and for some time thereafter I walked in thespian clothes.

In New York, my brother launched out again, this time in an advertising venture, for which he had me make some designs. One of them was an interior, for color reproduction, showing the early Puritans handing around among themselves a bar of Colgate's soap.

With very good reason, I recall another advertisement. It was one for the Devoe Company, makers of artists' supplies. The payment was partly in trade, my end being eighty dollars' worth of art materials, among them a beautiful English watercolor-box that opened on hinges, with trays of such great potentialities that they might have made me a watercolor artist.

Among many other events that helped to make my early years in New York memorable, there are particular reasons for me to remember the great blizzard of March, 1888. Just before it broke, I had been making a watercolor sketch on Madison Avenue at

104th Street—some brownstone houses, on both sides of which was high ground inhabited by the squatters of that period, with their old wagons and ramshackle huts, and the billygoats browsing around. There I had been sitting on some stones across the street, sketching away. There was still snow on the ground, but I worked on; with the result that I caught tonsillitis. The storm broke, but my illness kept me in bed during all its picturesque fury.

The city was buried and so was I. Sketching, with my nose to the window, was the limit of my journeying. It was long before the radio; I was told about the ravages of the storm, and later saw the photographs. The blizzard of '88 has become history. Like most of my early work in those far-away days, my pictures of the storm have vanished—although, perhaps, a few of them may still remain on some obscure walls. However, while I was still convalescing I made an oil sketch of our back yard, which I still have as a souvenir of those days. During this period I painted landscape and flowers on the brass plaques that were common ornaments of the time, also flowers on ebony panels. My mother was both pleased and alarmed. She feared for my future as an artist, and years later, when she came to my studio and I made an oil sketch of her, she still shook her head—as I have since shaken mine more than once, over the same issue.

When my brother dropped his advertising business, I went with him on a barnstorming tour, playing repertoire. I fought off his persuasion that I become an actor, against which I had a prejudice, and went along as an assistant manager. This was hardly a fortunate tour, almost every town having a special mishap in store for us. The wardrobe trunk of our little star was always one town behind. In one case, a famous minister happened to return to his home town the night we were there. Everybody went to welcome and hear him, with the result that our stage became the most populous part of the theatre.

Other incidents of like sort continued to occur until we arrived in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania. Fourteen miners had been buried in an explosion the day before. Our company held a frightened conference. Immediately, my resourceful brother arranged a benefit performance for the suffering families. He had the announcements printed at his own expense, and the whole company distributed them around the cabins of the miners. It was our last hope. The evening of the performance came. The Grand Opera House, as the theatre was known, filled up, and our pessimistic company, looking out through the curtain, saw their return fares to New York right in front of them. As assistant manager, I asked my brother, "What are we going to do about the money arrangement?" He replied, "That's easy, everything above expenses we give to the miners." After this successful night, it was my duty to go to the owner of the theatre and present the benefit proceeds, which amounted to seven dollars. When I laid the money on the table, his eyes opened like saucers and he asked, "What am I going to do with it?" I answered, "Give it to the suffering families." This experience may have added to my prejudice against becoming an actor.

Shortly after this tour, and again through my brother, I became connected with an attraction called "The Streets of Old London." It was located on the west side of Broadway, opposite Waverly Place. There was a front wall of stone, an imitation of the Bishop's Gate of London. Inside were reproductions of old English houses and an old English church, with a theatre at one end. At the booths were girls in Puritan costumes, men in the dress of the period, musicians who played old English madrigals, a clown in Elizabethan costume who danced and capered in Shakespearean style—altogether an amazing revival of the atmosphere of those old days.

After helping to paint the facades of "The Streets of Old

London," I got the job of painting the eighty-foot ceiling of the theatre. Nothing daunted, I divided it into panels and successfully completed the work. The scene painter doing the stage sets, an elderly man by the name of Dayton, was so intrigued with my performance that he asked me to go along with him as a scene painter. I told him I knew next to nothing about it, and related my experience in plain and fresco painting. He said, "You'll do what I teach you." The result was that I went with him to New Haven and there, at the Opera House, became a scene painter. Dayton had unlimited confidence in me, allowing me to work on the curtain and on other drops. Among other things, I painted a backdrop for a battle scene with dead and wounded—I am thankful I shall never have to look at it again.

After returning to New York, I began my formal art studies, first at Cooper Union and subsequently at the Art Students League, which was then on East 23rd Street. At the same time, while going on with my art studies at night, I continued with scene painting as a livelihood. At that time, houses of the wealthy were turned over to the scene painter during the summer, while the family was in the country. A dining-room was to be decorated, a work of months; arbors and grape vines were painted realistically in the soft colors of fresco, enclosed with panels of fruit pieces. I had a chance to try my skill, and I hope my still lifes made the family's mouth water when they returned in the fall.

With this start, I later found myself working on ceilings, laying gold leaf on decorative designs. I lay flat on my back, like Michelangelo when he did the Sistine ceiling; and like him, I had a stiff neck and a lame back. But his work still remains, while of mine no more than a personal memory. Later on, I did a hotel interior on Broadway near the Metropolitan Opera House, in crumpled brown paper soaked in glue, gilded over and spotted with ornaments. My heavy baroque period, I might call it.

My fellow assistant scene painters resented my art study, and once, while we were working at Wallack's Theatre, they played a trick on me. They were busy on an interior set, with panels on which the head painter, a conceited fellow, had been painting fruits and flowers. The assistant told me that he had asked if I would not finish some of the panels. In my simplicity, I accepted. My work must have been rather good, because when the boss saw it, he was furious. At that moment, I realized that my career as a scene painter, which I had already been carrying on for several years, was doomed. I was too shocked and disheartened by this unmerited injustice to continue.

Followed free-lancing again, this time with the old Moss Engraving Company. At first I worked inside, preparing photographs for reproduction; later on, I carried out my assignments at home. For some years this work, while maintaining me, allowed me to keep on with my studies at the Art Students League and, to a certain extent, to be master of my own time.

Out of working hours, I was studying, as best I could, art and history, incessantly reading. I loved fairy tales and old sagas. And ancient Irish fables fascinated me—the sow that swam to Spain to help the original Vagabond King, who struck the pole of combat so hard that seven counties shivered. Mentally, I took my vacations in the Emerald Isle in a boat on Lake Killarney, steered by a magic incantation in Gaelic.

Having made my way through youth in this fashion, between my fancies and hard work, I spent my early manhood in a more or less similar effort, earning my living in divers ways so that I might keep up my studies. Many privations were deliberately incurred while I used various odds and ends of jobs as a means to an art end. Throughout this period, all my private studies meant a definite loss of revenue. It was a willful sacrifice, but it gave me the proud satisfaction of not being a hired man bound to the

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wheel of commissions. Out of this independence and the absence of more favorable conditions, grew the feeling that for me art was to be a personal luxury that I would afford to the utmost. I know that at times I became jealous of my fellow-workmen on this account. Often I had to search for new work in other fields, to sustain my dual role. Now, however, those struggles are hard to recall, as though they had been experienced by someone else; the years have flowed over them and they are submerged.

III

SELF-REVELATION

At Cooper Union, where I first began to study art, and later at the Art Students League, where I continued to attend classes over a period of some ten years, the art taught during my time was either the academic French of the day or the academic painting of the Munich school. I believe that drawing from the antique Greek sculpture and, still more, studying the drawings of the old masters that hung in the hall, made me dissatisfied. Basically, the drawing and painting then taught were too imitative. The accepted dictum was to know your grammar first and then to interpret. I questioned the wisdom of this procedure for myself. The school proficiency which I attained was carefully laid away on the shelf.

Directly, I ventured out to interpret life for myself, to render the impression of the city and the people that I really cared for. With a pencil, at first timid and faltering, I adapted my line to what I saw. Then, gradually becoming more assured, my line began automatically to react to my feeling, thus bearing out my idea that technique is evolved from subject matter. In this instinctive way, I set myself in opposition to the authority that had governed my art instruction. It was a choice between becoming merely a cultured artist or learning to make a personal statement of my own feeling. As in life one can be content with few necessities, so in art, after studying the masters of the past, one should

have humility and the courage to face the manifold forms of opposition that artificial standards have produced.

Such defiance of authority may become a personal necessity. I remember once having a conversation with Stephen Crane, then a pale young man, before he wrote his celebrated "The Red Badge of Courage." He scored the greatness of Shakespeare, feeling that what he had to say in literature was more important. He would be a king in his own right; even though it were a minor one, still a king, with a crown of his very own. On the other hand, I remember George de Forest Brush, my instructor at the Art Students League, laying down a law for the exquisite rendering of an object, as against a bold constructional statement. He wanted to immortalize a subject in its immobility, delicately to paint what one could look at a long time—a model in restraint, the artist fettered by conscious refinement. This idea he applied to his portraits, which have been taken very seriously. Brush did not believe in doing the crowd, but to me the impression of group life became a guiding star.

IV

MY FIRST SALE

While I was studying at the Art Students League, I went to live with a fellow-student in one of the towers of the old University Building, in Washington Square. The five flights of stairs we had to climb seemed endless. There was no Washington Arch then, and beautiful elm trees faced the imposing residences that still line the north side of the Square. In this building Morse invented the telegraph, and Abbey and other noted artists lived, before destiny led me down the same corridors.

Having left my studies on one of my frequent sketching trips, I found myself one pleasant day on the Morris and Essex Canal, near Jersey City. Seeing a picturesque canal boat in the foreground, I took it as a subject. There was a family living on the boat, and a woman stood in the doorway, evidently willing to pose. After I had been working for some time, she came over and looked at my work. She seemed pleased with it, for she remarked that if I would put one of her children in the picture, she would buy it for two dollars. I accepted her offer—and there on the banks of that waterway I sold my first picture, unframed and without the payment of a commission, to adorn a canal houseboat. When I returned to my studio, I changed one of the dollars into small coin and, following the tradition then prevailing in that house, I threw the coins into the corners and under the furniture. When later my

funds would run low, I would get down on all fours to find some of the treasure trove.

Most of my sketching at that time was on the elevated lines, much of it a furtive rendering of fellow passengers. Once, while I was sketching a Chinaman, a man sitting opposite, after observing me for a while, came over, sat down alongside me and introduced himself. It was Abbott Thayer. He told me that he was going down to the Washington Market, for recreation. He was probably then painting one of his great angel pieces, and merely wanted rest and a change—perhaps the odor of the market to counteract his heavenly visions. A very simple, unassuming man, and a great artist.

Between my unceasing struggle for bread and butter and my art studies, it is rather difficult to uncoil the tangle of details, many of them long lost. Unlike Delacroix, I did not keep a conscientious diary for forty years, one which I might now consult in accounting for myself during all these years. Instead, I can only flit about like a bird of passage.

V

PARIS

For years, while studying at the Art Students League, I had seen student after student go to Paris to complete his art study on scholarships or otherwise. This did not disturb me. I went my own way, making my living and keeping up my studies. Eventually, in 1896, I found myself with \$250 in savings, on which I determined to make the trip to Paris, to find out for myself what it might really mean to me.

I had solved many problems in regard to the personal equation. Already having discarded the academic French art taught in this country, I had planned to take my chances at home. But why not still see for myself the reputedly wonderful Mecca of art for students of the whole world? I bought a new pair of shoes, and after taking the steamer soon found myself in the famous Latin Quarter of Paris. I roomed with Solon Borglum, whose sculpture was later to be preferred by some to that of his famous brother Gutzon Borglum, who was to carve up our western mountains.

Having a French roof to crawl under, I betook myself to the masterpieces at the Louvre. How I wish that the Rubens, the Van Dycks and the Titians could have looked down on the "barefoot" pilgrim on those miles of polished floor—my new shoes hurting me sorely, the mocking eyes of the Mona Lisa looked down on a soul who walked in pain.

Here were the greatest pictures of the world, but they were not revelations—just other examples of masters I had already known in New York. Immortal masterpieces beyond doubt, although reproductions had dulled the edge of curiosity. Perhaps my appreciation would have been more unbounded on less aching feet.

Then began my Paris test. I called on young men I knew, analyzed their attitudes and hopes. Some were becoming boulevard artists, to strut on Montparnasse and meet the celebrities at the famous Café du Dôme. Others were in their element, with a career right ahead of them. Still others were the pathetic ruins of American students who had lingered too long, artists in limbo, a tattered fringe of derelicts to whom a new American was a godsend because he meant a meal.

Here, as elsewhere, one could see as one wanted to. I could see that Paris was a delightful place to stay and study, on regular remittances. Even so, however, not a city of art equality. The French artists were polite, but under the surface there was not that affinity, that forgetfulness of nationality that comes so naturally to an American. Feeling this, I resented then, as I still resent, the claims for French art made by its dealers, to the unjust detriment of our own work, even of the highest grade. I had come to Paris to verify the ideas I had gained in New York. But the more I surveyed Paris and its art, the less I desired that city as my alma mater. Great were its artists and stupendous was its glory, but I had always preferred, as I still prefer, the quiet little brook to the mighty river. Being unsubsidized, there was no claim on me to serve out a sentence. I could take my independence back to New York, and my faith in myself and my hope in hand. My object accomplished, I took what was left of my savings and boarded the steamer, leaving Paris to those who felt they needed it.

VI

I AM DISCOVERED

More generally, one adopts a profession. In my case, I can say that a profession adopted me. When I left the shelter of my art school studies to find out what meaning the subject matter of my own choice might have, I hardly expected to find new methods. I had been fed up on the methods taught in art school, so much instructed expertness, so much apparent skill in painting, so much hard work that only softened the brain and ruined the eyes, so many travelers on the same road, the art competitions that took one to Paris on awarded scholarships.

Taking what kit of knowledge I already owned, I set out on my own quest, to become self-sustaining, proud to be in the service of art on my own footing—a private matter between my own idea of art and myself. I was happy enough to go my simple way, to be guided by intuition, willing to let the glory and the publicity go to others.

When I returned to New York, I had only a few dollars left. I found a small studio on West Fourteenth Street, at seven dollars a month. (Alas, those happy days are not here again.) There I felt at home; I could get work to earn my living and at the same time paint my street scenes of the city.

The building at 232 West 14th Street is one of my many associations with New York's art life in the decade beginning

about 1906. Formerly a fine mansion, the house was equipped with a skylight and converted to the use of artists. The neighborhood became the West Side Latin Quarter. It was here that I carried on my personal researches. Here Edward Kramer had a studio next to mine, and John Marin was working towards his future. Other artists—illustrators, sculptors, etchers—lived in this building; the fine balustrade in the hall was polished by famous artists on their road to fame.

Curiously, the tenants included three women who were not artists; although from their three little rooms radiated a sympathy with and an interest in their neighbors which became famous throughout the house. The trio, who were inseparable, comprised Miss Ellis, a gentle old maid, shy and sensitive, and two sisters, Norwegians, one of them a beautiful blonde young widow who had lost her husband, a sea captain, when she was sixteen. Although never to any extent associating with the other tenants, the trio always had the respect and often the gratitude of the young and frequently impetuous artists who were sowing their wild oats. Studio parties often disturbed the peace of the night, but none of the women ever complained. Often I thought that perhaps these three women were enjoying the parties vicariously by the sounds that emanated from them. In her demure way, Miss Ellis would make little presents that endeared her to her young artist friends. I still have a cream pitcher with a village painted on it, which brings to my memory both her and the atmosphere of "232."

It was at this place that I had my first experience with an art dealer, an experience that has become doubly memorable because it resulted in my being—as the phrase goes—discovered.

My neighbor Edward Kramer had returned from a much more extensive European trip, having studied in Munich, Berlin and Paris. He was a fine, sensitive artist who was just then beginning

those elusive personal paintings of the Adirondacks, which are so rare today. Although his was an austere, aloof character, we became warm friends. When William Macbeth, the dealer, came to see his works, Kramer brought him in to see mine, thus—as it happened—opening to me the professional gates of art.

I was then an unsophisticated young artist, surrounded by my original street scenes, as yet unseen by any purveyor to the public. But with his shrewd and kindly eyes, Macbeth immediately took the measure of my possibilities, backing his judgment with coin of the realm by purchasing two small pictures, and at the same time inviting me to bring some others to his gallery. Later, when collectors began buying my pictures from Macbeth, the fact could no longer be denied; almost overnight, I had become a professional artist. Whenever I now squeezed my tubes of paint, it was to mean bread and butter, rent, a new responsibility, a new dignity in the life work I had chosen, a new pleasure in the delightful game of chance that getting a reputation involved.

I had become a Macbeth man. In his gallery, my photo hung with the photos of celebrities. There I could meet well-known artists in an atmosphere of renown, for William Macbeth was then one of the very few dealers to stand up bravely for American art. Subsequently, at his gallery on Fifth Avenue, I had my one-man show. From this first encounter with the public and the critics, I did not emerge entirely a hero. The gentlemen of the press were of varied opinion. But critics like Huneker, McCormick and Caffin turned the scales my way. Mr. Macbeth congratulated me on the artistic success I had achieved. He continued to sponsor me among his clientele and to send my work to exhibitions.

But an artist's star shines fitfully, and other stars began to dominate the Macbeth firmament. Their light was of a higher magnitude; in the vernacular, they were more saleable. My pictures with their human message were to be superseded by large, pleasing

landscapes and by figure pieces, the latter as though made for direct transportation to museums. This meant a change in policy, if not in art; with the result that I and my brother-artists who now came in at the front door of Macbeth's gallery were—for the time being—politely let out again through the back door. Other art galleries, too, had their front and back doors. It was only by a process of going through one and out the other that I was finally to arrive in friendly territory.

VII

OLD STUDIO DAYS

About 1900, with a fellow-student from the Art Students League, I took a studio on Broadway near 32nd Street. Somehow we got together enough furniture, and with an easel and some Japanese prints that were in vogue at the time, we made our commitment to a life of art. In another studio in the same building, Henry McBride and Gustav Verbeck were also making their commitment to art. Verbeck, whose father was the first American missionary to Japan, was a lively, whimsical chap; he originated the Tiny Tads who cavorted in the New York Sunday *Herald* over so many years. I can recall some of McBride's water-colors that seemed very good to me—this was before he became a teacher and subsequently an art critic, as he is known today.

After this venture, I took a studio on West 50th Street, with another student, David Erikson, with whom I enjoyed a close friendship for many years. He came from Duluth and was sponsored by a patron to whom he gave an excellent accounting. He was a sensitive young man of real talent, coupled with a sense of humor. He modeled a bear cub which first became a classic with us, then later found its way to the public. Subsequently, he painted poetic moonlights. It has always been a regret to me that in later life we lost track of each other, Erikson spending his time between Provincetown, Mass., and France. Later in that building,

George de Forest Brush, my instructor at the Art Students League, painted many of his pictures of mother and child.

On East 59th Street, the Lighthouse for the Blind now occupies the site of the old Aguilar Public Library, where I had a studio in a transitional period of my art life, shortly after the turn of the century. I was married while in this building and it is the birthplace of my daughter, Virginia. When the structure was torn down, West 23rd Street saw us next, across the street from John Sloan, a good neighbor indeed. While I was out sketching one early morning, the building next door caught fire, and Sloan came over to rescue my family—remaining a calm hero when I returned. There were stimulating meetings at the Sloans', with Yeats, the father of the Irish poet, and many other interesting art folk.

Later on, we were back on East 59th Street, at Number 57, with Mahonri Young, the sculptor, in our building. Next door, George Luks carried on his art career in his picturesque fashion, a whole history in itself. Carlson, who painted still life so amazingly, and whose life left a legend of romance and mystery: of a country house barred to visitors, of a wife seldom seen, and of a son, Dines, shy as a ghost, who also painted still life. Before he married Marie Harriman, Charles Cary Rumsey also had a studio on the block, where he sculptured his animals.

Mahonri Young was the art sage of our building. He had a vast knowledge of art history, a most retentive memory, and hours would pass while we listened to his informative observations, principally on the French classics. His etchings and sculpture have become public history. Mahonri, or "Hon," as he was familiarly called, is a grandson of Brigham Young. Then an exemplary widower, Mahonri later married Dorothy Weir, daughter of that excellent artist, Alden Weir, and now divides his time between Gramercy Park and the ancestral home in Connecticut. Among our close friends at this period were Guy Pène du Bois and his

family. It was to Guy du Bois that I felt always free to unbosom myself of my art theories, as well as of my feelings about my contemporaries. Another good friend, and a patron as well, was George Acheson, now vice-president of a bank, who spent summers in Paris, and knew the French modernists well.

After some ten years on East 59th Street, we moved to West 54th Street. There in our huge room with its nine windows, Professor Roerich first started his art school, later to develop it into the Roerich Art Museum, in the famous skyscraper at 103rd Street and Riverside Drive. Next door was a court house. Entirely lacking in all that frequently makes the courtroom so dramatic, the scenes there were prosaic. Petty cases these, in that west side court, pathetic in their very pettiness . . . A poor negro caught in the web of gambling, his African humor turning the tables on the judge, who cannot be stern with so childish a soul . . . A boy and his girl-wife, with a tender infant and an irate mother-in-law. Has he nothing to give his wife? Yes, he has . . . He gives his last dollar bill, kisses the baby, and is sentenced for non-support. The drab little drama is quickly over, the next case is called . . . Year after year of routine cases—too painful for me to see often or to render in pictures. Why catch humanity by the shirt-tail when I could go out into the open and see more pleasant things? . . .

The yearly balls of the Art Students League, held in the old building on East 23rd Street, were gay and colorful parties. They were not entirely impromptu, but the spontaneity of youth gave them a character lacking in the more stately, expensive parties at the Vanderbilt and other luxurious hotels, which were far from our simple madcap revels. The art students relied upon home-grown talent from the school itself and upon improvised costumes. The decorations of the studios gave them the spirit of a night in Paris. I was a perennial Robin Hood, until the costume wore out. Beautiful southern belles would wear their mothers' enchant-

ing costumes to prance around in. There were the marvelous Indian warriors' dance—a picture of muscular frenzy, the inevitable Virginia Reel, the Scottish Hornpipe; punch to drink that was not loaded, exuberance without satiety. There were William M. Chase, who was then teaching, and Kenyon Cox, George de Forest Brush and Blashfield. Also, among others, Bryson Burroughs as a gay cavalier, Betty Woodman as the irresistible Dolly Varden, Mabel Welch as a Puritan maiden, Louis Loeb as a Venetian Doge, Myra Thompson as a belle of Kentucky, dancing with Oliver Herford—while I stood looking on helpless, not yet having learned how to dance.

VIII

THE ARMORY SHOW

The American art world in the years immediately preceding 1913 was a landscape before an impending storm. There were many groups of artists, with conflicting points of view, who felt a distinction between American art work and the higher classed foreign work. Chase and Henri were both vigorous opponents of the Hudson River men; Chase as a progressive in the painting of his day, Henri as a progressive in art teaching. And the local storms that broke over the American scene seemed portentous enough in those days. The National Academy shows were still controversial. Childe Hassam was an artist of might. Redfield was scooping up honors. The exhibitions of the "Eight" were artistic events of note; and on the outskirts, Max Weber and others were growling against the Academy. Europe and America were still fairly good neighbors in art and the stage was well set for the greatest French invasion that was ever to descend upon us.

It is rather extraordinary that while working along in my solitary way, with so little group association, I should have become a party to the forming of the greatest international art exhibition ever held in New York. Let me try to reconstruct the sequence of events that culminated in this volcanic eruption, which shook our art foundations at the time, whose reverberations are still felt even to this day.

Because of conditions existing in New York before the

time of the Armory Show, artists had long considered the Academy of Design entirely inadequate for their exhibition needs. The space at the Academy's command had not expanded to meet the growing needs of artists, with the result that other group exhibitions began to form. The Society of American Artists was the Academy's first logical competitor. It was composed of artists lately returned from Europe, who embodied a culture different from that of the Hudson River School and whose paintings were of salon proportions. Included were artists who have become important in our annals: William M. Chase, John W. Alexander, Robert Blum, Bryson Burroughs, Daniel C. French, Alexander Harrison, Robert Henri, John LaFarge, F. W. MacMonnies, Albert P. Ryder, George Fuller, and many others. Their exhibitions were thrilling and taken most seriously by the younger artists.

Yet it came to pass that in 1906 the Academy and the Society of American Artists merged. This fact did not simplify the art situation. Outside exhibitions became a necessity. The Society of Independent Artists came along with a non-jury idea, conceived by Robert Henri as a protest against the limited facilities of the Academy and at the same time as a means for young artists to show their work without the selective competition set up by any jury. Afterwards came the New Society comprised of about fifty artists, each with an established name for individual effort. The works of these men were accepted at important exhibitions; dealers featured one-man shows; artists began forming new groups. The ten American painters who had their exhibitions at the Montross Galleries composed an older group which had ceased to function. Under these conditions, Elmer MacRae and I formed the "Pastelist's Society," for the showing of intimate drawings and pastels. Without our realizing it then, this society was to have important consequences for the subsequent course of American art.

Some time afterwards in the Madison Gallery, of which Henry

Fitch Taylor was the director, Walt Kuhn, Elmer MacRae and I were exhibiting our work. As passengers on a ship are thrown together and become friendly, so in our voyage through a two-week exhibition, time was not lacking to talk shop. Walt Kuhn said to me, "Myers, you and MacRae have done so well with your 'Pastelist's Society,' why can't we get together on a scheme for a large exhibition?" So we agreed to talk it over at my studio nearby, at 7 West 42nd Street in the McHugh Building, across the street from the New York Public Library. There our first meeting was held, and a tentative list of members was made up which finally resulted in the organization of the "Association of American Painters and Sculptors." As Walt Kuhn says in his commemorative pamphlet, *The Story of the Armory Show*: "The group of four men who first set the wheels in motion had no idea of the magnitude to which their early longings would lead." Again, as Henry McBride wrote in *The New York Sun* of November, 1912: "The story of how the American Painters, Sculptors and Engravers Society came to be formed has not been told until now, and it is worth reciting. The idea was suggested in the course of a little talk at the studio of Jerome Myers, the painter. . . ."

Our first problem was to avoid the political angle of human relationships, to include those men only who, while being individualistic artists, would be harmonious within our small group. Having formed our nucleus, we continued our meetings at the Madison Gallery, which became the battleground of many discussions. In the meantime, our membership having grown to twenty-five, we incorporated and elected J. Alden Weir as President and Gutzon Borglum as Vice-President. My duties as a member of the executive committee involved frequent trips to Stamford, Connecticut, where Borglum lived. On the whole, these duties took up practically an entire year of my time—which I came to regard as love's labour well lost.

Although the numerous meetings have become mingled in my memory, I recall that outstanding difficulties were the question of a site for the exhibition and the fact that J. Alden Weir had resigned as President. Finally there came a meeting when hope was nearly abandoned, even the stout-hearted Walt Kuhn becoming discouraged; it seemed as though our work was all to be wasted for lack of a location. As we were leaving, I told Kuhn that I would go to see Arthur B. Davies. When MacRae and I called on Davies, we asked whether he would take the presidency, if only to lend us the benefit of his name. He declined at first, but then reconsidered. Arrangements were made to hold the exhibition in the 69th Armory, at Lexington Avenue and 25th Street, and other preparations went on apace. Thus it was that I, an American art patriot, who painted ashcans and the little people around them, took part in inducing to become the head of our association the one artist in America who had little to do with his contemporaries, who had vast influence with the wealthiest women, who painted unicorns and maidens under moonlight. What I did not know was Davies' intense desire to show the modern art of Europe in America. But through his indefatigable energy, and the financial support he secured, he changed what was to have been an exhibition of American work into the great exhibition of foreign art that made the Armory Show so memorable. Our first idea of an all-American show had broadened far beyond the horizon.

Apart from the members' own works, the selection of paintings and sculpture was carefully supervised by Davies and his special committee. I remember the remarkable fact that Davies made a water-color sketch showing the location of each picture—an instance of the care and devotion he gave to the exhibition. On February 17, 1913, came the day of the grand opening, with all its thrills and publicity, and with every sign that the show was going to click.

At the very beginning, Leon Dabo said to me, "This man Davies has started something. I'm afraid it may be more of a calamity than a blessing, though it's a damn good show." Dabo was referring to the fact that the Armory Show was being transformed from an American exhibition of art to a predominantly foreign one. Davies himself felt that he was conferring a blessing upon America in thus making it acquainted with these newest aspects of foreign art. I can still see his keen, eager face alight with enthusiasm when he said to me, "Myers, you will weep when you see what we've brought over." And when I did see the pictures for the first time, my mind was more troubled than my eyes, for Davies had unlocked the door to foreign art and thrown the key away. Our land of opportunity was thrown wide open to foreign art, unrestricted and triumphant; more than ever before, our great country had become a colony; more than ever before, we had become provincials.

Public reaction was instantaneous, the acclaim unanimous; the show's success mounted day by day. Enthusiasm ran higher and higher. Night dinner parties made a bee-line for the famous "Nude Descending the Stairway," as well as for the believe-it-or-not sculpture. There was publicity galore; a thousand items hit the news columns. Here the cubist was in his glory, there the abstractionist was on the line. The great French moderns revealed themselves in all their pristine glory; and while the American artists were finally shown, in this swirling medley of art on parade, they had to take it on the chin.

One exciting day followed another, one score after another for foreign art. People became freak-conscious, the normal art taste was bewildered. Faith lost its balance. Art values shivered; some went down to zero, others leaped skyward. The visitors' attention was raped by sculpture strange and gigantic, by pictures measured in yards. While foreign names became familiar, un-American prop-

aganda was ladled out wholesale. Day after day the barrage went on. Art writers hung up the shingle of Cézanne. Van Gogh had not yet come into his own; but the ground was being prepared for what was to follow.

It was at the Armory Show that I was introduced by friends to E. L. Henry, who was then in his eighties. I had known his work, for which I had a great respect. Together we went around the huge show. Henry had an impairment of one eye, to such an extent that he had to hold the eyelid up with his finger to see. Yet he carefully looked at all the pictures, and when he had finished, he said, "Mr. Myers, they told me there was a lot of crazy wild art here, but I really found it wonderfully interesting and I am very glad to have seen it." This was the unbiased tribute of an unpretentious American painter of a past generation.

Thus the history of the Painters, Sculptors and Engravers Society divides itself into two parts: the first, the formation of an American exhibition; the second, under the presidency of Arthur Davies, the great showing of foreign works. With the appointment by Davies of a super-council, our society had ceased to be democratic, according to my mind. But in all justice, perhaps it could only have become the success it was by the very methods used. In his story of the Armory Show, Walt Kuhn tells of the how and why of this success, of the means and the people—forces of which other members, including myself, had had no knowledge.

The closing day of the Armory Show smashed all traditions. It was the wildest, maddest, most intensely excited crowd that ever broke decorum in any scene I have witnessed. The huge Armory was packed with the élite of New York—and many not so élite. The celebrities were too numerous to register. Everyone came to witness the close, and the audience created a show equally as phenomenal as the exhibition itself. Millionaires, art collectors, society people all were packed in like sardines. Fortunately,

the huge sculptures bore the strain of the surging crowd without casualties. More interesting to me than all this mob, the millionaires and the celebrities and all the Grade B people, was the figure of William M. Chase, with his immaculate high hat and his Sargentesque appearance—an artist whose work was not included in the exhibition and who had every reason to feel the indignity of having been slighted. Although the later selection of artists had gone out of the hands of our original group, nevertheless I for one felt the injustice keenly.

I recall, as an aftermath of the exhibition, a wild celebration of the society members, with John Quinn and others making merry around the deserted Armory like college boys on a rampage. But soon the members anxiously took to tabulating the final score; the show was over and the curtain had been rung down.

After this great success, it was natural that they should have some curiosity about the financial results; and accordingly, by their constituted authority, they called a meeting, to hear the secretary's report. What ensued at that session, held at the Manhattan Hotel, threw a characteristic light on the difference between the artist and the business man while facing the firing line. When the report was duly laid on the table, a silent drama took place. Guy du Bois was the first to look at it. Shrugging his shoulders, he said simply, "I resign." Robert Henri followed, with the same procedure and conclusion; then likewise George Bellows, Mahonri Young and several others, including myself. It was rather a marvelous demonstration of the fact that artists are not especially business-like in the acceptance of an unsatisfactory situation. Dignity rode high, as one by one the members left in silence.

Apropos of this final incident, I think it fitting again to quote Walt Kuhn: "It took an entire year to close up the affairs of the exhibition, with many disagreeable chores of a minor sort. There were no debts left to embarrass any of us. If anybody was embar-

THE ARMORY SHOW

rassed, it would only have been Arthur B. Davies, and he certainly did not show it. After squaring everything, the bulk of the money left was turned over to him and by him possibly to friends who had supplied it to him in the beginning. All had worked hard, not one member of the Association accepted a penny as remuneration for his services."

As always, time has smoothed out whatever differences there may have been, and the Armory Show remains a great tradition in our art history.

IX

AFTER THE ARMORY SHOW

One startling result of this exhibition was a conscious intellectualism among many of our younger artists, first breaking out in the current literature on art. I quote from an article by Andrew Dasburg in *The Arts* of November, 1923: "So Cubism, in turn with other phases of modern art, is face to face with a resentment that arises from a desire for permanency and a fear of the insecurity of change. The uncreative mind, with its reverence for the past, stands as a barrier against the spirit of art, striving to appear in infinite forms out of the artist's intelligence. Nature and the conventions with which they may be familiar are the standards used by the unimaginative to appraise the new. For the modern artist, the objects and occurrences of natural phenomena are not art. Nature in itself is neither good nor bad; it exists—life is. For him not appearances, but causation—the underlying geometric mechanism—is the guiding principle on which he builds."

Here we have an example of a new vocabulary, by which the mind is analyzed and the years of individual effort to achieve a personal result are minimized; unconsciously, a philosophy of opportunism appears as a slogan of modernism. And this then young man goes on to say, "This gave a complex and astonishing combination of dynamic and static elements. Here began the dis-

solution of the objective image until it ultimately became incorporated into the space surrounding it. A transformation obtained through the extension of planes through planes, forming an architectonic unit in which the remaining fragments of the dissolved objects were held together only by the law of association. Even though the sculptural aspect of things was destroyed and transformed into purely spatial sensations, the technique for bringing about illusional depth was still employed."

Here was young America innocently advocating a French propaganda, that has now become an accepted dictum among those ashamed of their homely forebears, who could not understand such a process of reasoning any more than could Raphael, Michelangelo, Rembrandt or Vermeer. Surely such ideas would have left the primitives agape. It is art recoiling on itself. A pessimistic humanity has its emotions thrown into confusion; with the consequence, more or less directly, that class distinction is established, together with a doctrinaire point of view about art. It needs follow that these intellectual prodigies, as expressed on French canvas, would become commercially very valuable, would be held like the sword of Damocles over the heads of those simple artists who, despite a reverence for the past, might yet have the courage to make individual contributions to art.

It is a destructive law of aggression to employ high-priced publicity; as it is also true that, in its subtler forms, propaganda produces many innocent champions. It is my impression that Arthur Davies, himself a keen thinker, with his personal and beautiful art, fell a victim to this pessimistic philosophy. Secure in a place of his own, recognized and applauded by a wealthy world at his feet, but with no love for his fellow-Americans, he let the foreign lure rape him and his exquisite ability. Art-weary Paris, with its American acolytes, felt the need of new merchandise, and famous artists, some of whom juggled the arts of the past skillfully, who

did astounding feats with Negro art and other primitives, could supply this new merchandise; with the result that we have the phenomenon of modern art in the most novel juxtaposition of art that the world has ever seen.

Yet essential values still obtain, although a baroness seeking pictures for a new museum of abstract art once declared that she would throw away all the Rembrandts if she could have but one Kandinsky. It is a sad fact that art was so analyzed that its different ingredients had to be dished up separately, to become monsters—each in its own right. No real work of art was ever without its quality of abstraction; an abstraction, in a sense, from nature. However, what we have in this so-called abstract art is merely a diagrammatic anatomy, in all manner of evasive forms but without the body. A new form of academical sterility takes the place of a real work of art.

X

FLIGHT FROM WAR

When I made my first trip to the art world of Paris, to test my fortune, I had found out which side of the ocean I needed for my career. The proof that I had been right in my choice was the success that I was later to have through casting my lot here. So many artists had returned from Paris, who, despite their advantages, had since gone under; while I, more wisely than I knew, had gathered together my motives in the streets of New York, where the vast drama of life was each day freshly enacted. This country, this city, became my element; here I made a definite commitment for my art life. What I had to say was my own. The language of art I spoke was my own: simple and direct, from life to mood, from mood to life.

My comment was an instinctive one. Realistic to some, it was not so to others. Guy Pène du Bois, a great critic and a great artist, in a foreword to the catalogue of my Exhibition at the Milch Gallery in 1919, had this to say on the point: "It may be that the symbolist and idealist are wrong. The symbolist and the idealist are victims of a *parti pris*. The idealist, like his antithesis the pessimist, sees but one kind of world. The symbolist finds that images, in a world full of images, are poverty-stricken, for his concoction of others presages a belief in the greater wealth of his own images. Though I say it with considerable timidity, I am a

little afraid that the symbolist and the idealist look upon people as children or are children, for they attempt to arrange the facts people pass every day in a way which will make their significance plainer. Scientists have declared that no man can know anything beyond his own experience. I do not know whether this proves anything at all here. But it seems to me that if it is true, it proves that idealists and symbolists themselves do not see facts very plainly. But all these terms, these fruits of cataloguing minds, are merged as part of the working machinery in every important contribution to the world's art. Perhaps the most necessary part of realism, as an example, is mysticism. I say this because the ordinary realist is nothing more or less than a materialist. And to say a materialist, is to say a man who, accepting the body, denies the soul which may be to deny the very thing by which the body lives. It is certain that a picture of a live thing which renders but half of it is not a real picture of that thing. All this advanced, without much mooting over it, for what it is worth. In any case, when I say that Jerome Myers is a realist, I do not mean a realist in the commonly accepted or in the aborted sense. His work suggests both matter and spirit to me. It is not the half picture of the world which half-developed men make. It is not the clear, hard, decisive picture of the world which narrow-minded men make. It has force, a force which may hide behind many subtleties, and spread itself over many shades of thought and meaning without extenuation."

An appreciation such as this could not be but inspiring; the significance that my subjects had for me was further justified by this critic's reaction. Though I had turned my back on Paris, the slums of New York had not failed me. However, time was to turn my face towards Paris again. While Roger Fry, the English artist and writer, was curator of paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, he bought a number of my drawings for his private collection. At the same time, he urged me to go to London

on the ground that it would afford me a rich field. He said my work ought to be known in the British capital.

So, in 1914, abroad I went on the huge *Olympic*, accompanied by my wife and daughter. I had proposed to spend some months in London and Paris, studying the types in those cities that would be most congenial to me. Arriving in London somewhat out of season, I left behind a number of works and went to Paris, where we took a small apartment in the Latin Quarter. I brought my pencil to the markets of Paris and to the byways that interested me. One of my last sketches was in the Cathedral of Notre Dame, where I edged into the service and saw the great generals at a High Mass.

It was not long before the air seemed surcharged with rumors, which soon became so ominous that the American consul advised us to leave Paris. A general exodus was already in progress. We managed to get on a train for Rotterdam; but instead of arriving at our destination, we were dumped out at midnight at Brussels. Would the hotel man take Italian silver? Yes, he would; so we stopped there for the night. Early the next morning we got on another train for Rotterdam, in a free-for-all scramble with no respect for class. Mobilization had started, and after being searched at the frontier, we finally arrived in Rotterdam.

The rush had only just begun, and we were able to get comfortable quarters. But Europe had become an impossible place and England was the one objective. Bookings were a joke, the governments were taking over all the ships. However, through a friendly tip, we got on a Batavia liner for London. It happened that war was declared between Germany and England while we were at sea. I remember walking the deck all night with the captain while we were on the North Sea, watching the mine-layers—ghastly operations under the glorious northern lights. Our ship was stopped and searched; I remember how little animosity there was,

but what a bore to all concerned. By the time we got to London, committees of all kinds were being organized. All paper money had become valueless. Trying to book a steamer was the same old merry-go-round; one took anything one could get, with the feeling that the English needed their food and wanted you to get away and let them have it for themselves. I saw wealthy women to whom a banana was a rare feast.

After many failures, we at last embarked from Liverpool on the old *St. Louis*, of the American Line. It was a voyage I shall never forget. We were but three of the thousands who had involuntarily become nuisances in a country whose people were now engaged in the defense of their national integrity, their homes, their lives. Where normal conditions have been upset, it is folly to expect normal treatment; the annoyances we suffered were inevitable.

We had been in Paris when Austria declared war on Serbia. The subsequent undercurrent of unrest in the French capital had been only infrequently manifested. There had been plenty of rumors, most of which had been laughed at. But now on the *St. Louis*, as refugees, we had nothing to laugh about. There were about six hundred steerage passengers, all of whom, under ordinary circumstances, would have been in "first cabin." Among them they represented nearly every aspect of American life. Many of the women were in an invalid condition, through privation and exposure. We had been led to expect that the class restrictions would be removed, but they were not. There were twice as many people in the steerage, I was told, as under normal conditions. And on the deck we were so crowded that if one moved, all the others were forced to move; some had to remain in one position for hours at a stretch. Fortunately, after two days, we were allowed extra deck space, and the assembly room of the second class was turned over to the women and children. We slept on deck, or tried to, during the remainder of the voyage.

Otherwise, too, conditions were far from pleasant, although the management of the line could not be held accountable. The regular stewards of the *St. Louis* were English and had been called to the reserves; their places had to be filled at short notice, with such help as could be had. It is also probable that at Liverpool the ship had not been able to secure food in large enough quantities, or at reasonable rates. I know that I had been told by hotel proprietors there, as well as by waiters in restaurants, that they did not want our money but that they did want their food.

Food was served in the steerage on a dirty cloth, by dirty waiters. On the regular menu there were coffee, lard instead of butter, fish and potatoes previously cooked, and jam, the latter none too good. Certain other foods could be ordered if one could pay for them. Stewards asked a dollar for a plate of three sandwiches and tea, twenty-five cents for a lemon, fifty cents for a can of sardines, and three dollars for a cold chicken.

However, food was but one of the articles through which the helpless passengers were robbed. A woman's watch was removed from her wrist while she slept; a man was robbed of fifteen pounds that he had stored in his trunk; another lost his watch and chain. Steamer rugs were pilfered like umbrellas in the conventional joke. And on top of it all rats were everywhere in the hold.

When I got back to New York, it was with the desire to remain there the rest of my days.

XI

HAIL, MANHATTAN!

Paul Veronese and his glorious Venetians, Titian and his Grand Doges, splendid raiments of a splendid age, master workmen buoyed up by a logical apprentice system. And in contrast, myself with a solitary crayon pencil, peering at the crowded East Side of New York City, making notes of the historical poor, of the poverty that struggles on . . . At nightfall the surcease of a great city, the repose in the parks, or on the recreation piers, the aged gossip, the children at their endless play—a panorama which was for me unceasing in its interest, thrilling in its significance.

Mine was the privilege to pencil the scenes, to paint the pictures responding to these feelings; for if the poor are blessed by mouth and script, then my spiritual concept of humanity was to replace the silks and satins of the decorative Venetians. My love was my witness in recording these earnest, simple lives, these visions of the slums clothed in dignity, never to me mere slums but the habitations of a people who were rich in spirit and effort.

Sorrow takes note of the adverse picture. On Mulberry Street the Italian father proudly carries his bambino. The bambino becomes a slick, dangerous gunman whose life, so precious to his parents, is snuffed out by a rival . . . Or the Jewish father, whose face, rich in medieval majesty, bends over his pushcart to give some fruit to his little boy. The boy grows up to be a successful lawyer caught in a criminal mesh that shocks the nation . . . All

true enough, and yet these cases are exceptional. In the upward surge, lives full of civic rectitude are the rule.

To this teeming metropolis of the poor whom I studied, to them I came in quiet friendship. To them I owe much. Curiously enough, my contemplation of these humble lives opened to me the doors of fancy. The factory clothes, the anxious faces disappeared; they came to me in gorgeous raiment of another world—a decorative world of fancy, like an abstract vision. I was led to paint pictures in which these East Side scenes are lost in a tapestry of romance. Reality faded in a vault of dreams; as in my picture “Caprice,” which had the honor of an Academy award.

“... in this city where people of different nationalities and faiths live together in peace and harmony and enjoy the blessings of democracy.” These daily words of our municipal radio broadcast should be inscribed in letters of gold on our City Hall. The Statue of Liberty symbolizes an idea and this supreme statement represents its fulfillment. In the course of the many years I have spent among the diverse races that make up New York, I have seen their inherited antagonisms gradually vanish. Occasionally, prejudice may still make a picturesque diversion, the intangible pride of race may still prevail; but these and all the blatanicies incidental to the exactions of common daily life—all these are only on the surface. More and more in the hearts of our great city there is the unifying cry that we should continue to live in peace and harmony, that our children should so continue. This, the spiritual concept of our holy merger, has been also the inspiration of my studies. It is remarkable that on so small a part of the earth’s surface as Manhattan, this hope of a war-spent world should thrive so potently.

If Abraham Lincoln had been an artist and in circumstances like mine, I wonder whether his sympathies would not have led him, as I was led, to paint the common people, who he said were

made by God. With Benjamin Franklin, I suspect it would have been different. Can one imagine him a portrait painter—let us say, a cross between Raeburn and Rembrandt? Poor Richard, later on, was quite as much at home in a drawing room as he had been in his print shop; and best of all, he could drive a pretty sharp bargain. One thing I do feel, however, is that had Franklin been destined to be an artist, he would have been a real American artist.

It is many years since I pioneered with my city subjects. They are now far from being a virgin field. Many brushes have been busy, a furious barrage of talent has left hardly a place or a type unlimned. In this art activity *à la mode*, there is promiscuous shooting at nature with no closed season; obscure places are everywhere invaded, sometimes by sponsored or subsidized artists, in the hunt for new subjects. There is an epidemic of Voodoo types, of the picturesque Mexican, even of our suburban architecture—the free verse of painting, factual and fatuous. Art is thrown into the air—a ball for anyone to catch. There is so much imitation of a publicized style, so often of a French style already on the way to oblivion. While watching these changes come and go, an artist must be something of a philosopher.

NIGHT AND DAWN ON BROADWAY

Self-expression, by visualizing the things we see and feel, is an orchestration in major or minor moods, the projection of an objective reality, sharply defined or softened into a sentimental chiaroscuro. Advancing or receding, now changing into a subjective fantasy, with subject matter either a tyrant or a slave, the projection skirts the borders of the real, the human motive with all its subtle meanings embroidered in all its varying patterns.

But this process does not apply to Broadway. Broadway glittering with its incandescent announcements of humanity commer-

cialized; comedy and tragedy in huge letters of many-colored lights, tearing and devastating the sacred night; the movie houses inhaling and exhaling their human content. The sister houses of the drama, older but not wiser, lurk at the elbows of Broadway, paraphrasing and imitating, analyzing and satirizing the very life that enters to see—itself. These prodigious twins of an incestuous union, sobbing, laughing, declaiming, preaching, entertaining—all under the electric lights of Broadway that stab the night . . . The multiple sounds echo through all the minor Broadways in cities and towns from coast to coast: a United States now wringing its hands in mimic sorrow, now laughing at the mechanics of mirth, dancing to the sway of Broadway tunes, echoes of Tin Pan Alley . . .

Millionaires and newsboys hawking their wares . . . what will you read? . . what will you buy? . . exotic drinks are served at Sloppy Joe's . . . The glory that passes and repasses, glory submerged in a stream of humans. Decade after decade have I watched this ebb and flow, one generation marching after another. On their backs, different fashions have come and gone, but in their eyes the same expression reflects the lights of Broadway.

Here the artist looks in vain. Here is the spirit of imitation, a parade of mannequins of the moment; a medley of pygmies that one sees and forgets, pygmies who grieve and those who laugh. The wise and the nitwit, all alike stop or go at the traffic lights, the red light, the green light, symbols of life's futile rotation. The artist's eye is baffled, the orchestration he seeks—objective, subjective is cut short at every turn. Here art meets its doom, surrendering to the mechanical reproductions of moving photography, that can transfix this activity. The artist looks—and leaves . . .

Early morn on Broadway, the same light that tips the mountain tops of the Colorado canyons gradually discloses the quiet anatomy, the bare skeletons of the huge iron signs that trellis the

sky, now denuded of the attractions of the volcanic night. Almost lifeless, the tired entertainers of the night clubs and their friends straggle to their rooms, taximen compare notes and earnings, the vast street scene has had its curtain call, the play is over.

Dear old Broadway, for many years have I dwelt on your borders. I have known the quiet note of your dawn. Even earlier I would take my coffee at Martin's, at 54th Street—now, alas, vanished—where I would see creatures of the night life before they disappeared with the dawn.

One night a celebrated female impersonator came to the restaurant in all his regalia, directly from a club across the street. Several taximen began to poke fun at him. Unable any longer to bear their taunts, he got up and knocked all the taximen out cold. Then he went back to the club, only to lament under his bitter tears, "See how they've ruined my dress!"

Gone are the old-time Broadway oyster bars and chop houses that were the survivors of a tradition of their sporting patrons, the *bon vivants* of Manhattan. Gone are the days when the Hoffman House flourished on Madison Square, with its famous nudes by Bouguereau; when barrooms were palaces, on nearly every corner throughout the city; when Steve Brodie, jumping from Brooklyn Bridge, splashed the entire country with publicity; when Bowery concert halls dispensed schooners of beer for a nickel, with a stage show thrown in; when Theis's Music Hall still resounded on 14th Street with its great mechanical organ, the wonder of its day, a place of beauty, with fine paintings and free company and the frankest of female life. Across the street was Tammany Hall, and next to it Tony Pastor's, where stars of the stage were born. Tony himself, in dress clothes and top hat, sang his ballads, a gallant trouper introducing Lillian Russell and others to fame through his audience. Luchow's restaurant, still going, was the rendezvous for the musical gourmets of old Steinway Hall. Union

Square was then a Rialto, with the Union Square Theatre and the Star Theatre, with the Wallack Theatre not far away. The fashionable folk then took their afternoon stroll on Broadway from 23rd Street to 14th, and Fifth Avenue had not yet been opened to trade.

Madison Square was a select residential neighborhood. The famous Diana that topped the old Madison Square Garden was still in Augustus St. Gaudens' brain. The Reverend Dr. Parkhurst, of the church on Madison Avenue at 24th Street, was just beginning his celebrated Broadway vice crusade. Those were the days of the Tenderloin District, when there was a carbarn at 42nd Street and Broadway, and the Times Building was still well in the future; of the horsecar, the skill of the steel-plate engraver was honored and Currier & Ives lithographs were sold for a song; of the Havely's Minstrels, entertainers of Broadway, when vaudeville was something thrown in between the acts of a melodrama.

Fortunes were made in lower Broadway and spent none too wisely in upper. Those were the days of the railroad kings, the white marble palace of A. T. Stewart at 34th and Madison, whose store was the forerunner of Wanamaker's; of trotting horses, of Maude S, and the colored lithographs of racehorses beautifully exaggerated; when Anna Held had all the glamor of a Greta Garbo. Down in Patchin Place, two old men kept house: one of them Tom Barry, Barnum's celebrated clown, the other a ruined gambler—both living in peace for ten dollars a month; of Cornelius Vanderbilt, who told the public to be damned, then bought the French Meissonier's picture of Napoleon for \$65,000, then an unheard-of sum, and gave it to a museum, for the same American public.

In its prime was Daly's Theatre with Augustin Daly as the high priest of the comedies of Shakespeare, with Ada Rehan and a magnificent company, the toast of intellectual Broadway . . .

Sarony, who photographed celebrities only—the transient Broadway of these vanished nights becomes historical down memory's lane. The morning light on the theatres of 45th Street now recalls the thespian glories of the past . . . Shubert's Alley, a solitary tomcat sleeping off its Broadway night.

Thus in the early morn I salute Broadway and its skeleton anatomy. It is no dream for painters; but as I turn away, I cannot help murmuring, "God bless the Broadway that was, and be kind to the Broadway that is."

THE BURLESQUE

Generally speaking, burlesque theatres furnish low entertainment. Occasional crusades in the name of morality strip them of features deemed offensive to people who never go to see them. Such people can invoke the law against the broad human farce comedy that is the basis of burlesque, that appeals to the healthy, if not refined, instincts of the numerous people who have never read Rabelais, who would be bored by the droll stories of Balzac, and who cannot afford expensive night clubs, where often the girls do not need to strip and are not, as in burlesque, decorative ensembles that form naive stage pictures like animated lithographs.

The comedians of the burlesque theatre, who by now have been practically banished, were skillful technicians, who could expose in satirical extravaganza the follies and emotional inanities that are the sum total of our inhibitions. As a frequent observer, I have been impressed by the sincerity of the audience. On the runway extending out over the orchestra, the girls would gesture back and forth. It was not always of beauty; yet never that I can remember did these onlooking men, by word or gesture, annoy or belittle the performers. Pitifully inadequate the girls often were for their parts; yet they were working girls, catering to an audience of men who also worked for a living.

HAIL, MANHATTAN!

In this common workshop of entertainment, among these imitation actresses, I have seen at times real jewels, featured girls who exercised all their youth and talent, working an enchantment within their narrow limits. There was one young girl who did the so-called strip-tease act. Playfully casting away her garments, she disclosed the full glory of her beautiful figure, her movements unsurpassed in a harmony of action. Had that inspired girl had the benefit of a French or German background of publicity, she would have revealed her art to a top-hat audience. Susceptible artists would have filled their sketch-books, photographers would have vied with one another, books of laudation would have appeared, and a world celebrity would have danced onto the newspaper pages. Yet this audience of ordinary people, in this ordinary burlesque theatre, applauded her in their simple way, and for years kept on applauding her as a featured artist, her name up in electric lights. Many another girl there was, too, who did her act with provocative subtlety, mistresses of their genre. These stars enjoyed a passing glory as queens of a burlesque that still survives. The lights of Broadway have been emblazoning the names of many famous high-salaried stars who can claim the humble Burlesque as their alma mater.

INCIDENTS

Once while sketching a young Italian mother and her baby on a Staten Island ferry boat, I was brought, violently and for the first time, face to face with an ancient superstition. Suddenly in the midst of my sketching, the young mother came at me like a tigress. "You take my baby," she screamed, "I kill you!" The ferryman stood alongside me and between us we tried to pacify the frenzied woman. I tore up the sketch and threw the bits on the deck. Finally, the woman calmed down, and from her I gathered the explanation that her baby was not yet a year old and

that therefore a picture of it would bring bad luck or worse. On that little trip I thus learned something to avoid, something which in all my experience, even in the Italian section of the city, I had never before encountered.

However, a further incident was to teach me still another lesson, somewhat different in import but in the same general direction. In Hamilton Fish Park, on East Houston Street, I was once sitting on a bench, making some sketches of children at play. An inquisitive child peeped over my shoulder, and then called to a companion, "He's taking kids." Other children came over and the little crowd grew thicker and thicker. "What's the matter?" the inquiry was repeated over and over. "A man taking kids," the word passed along. "He's taking kids, he's a kidnapper, a kidnapper!" In another few moments, the park guard and I were surrounded by a mob of children howling to get at the kidnapper. There was nothing to do until the storm finally subsided of itself to the guard's relief and mine.

SUMMERS IN MANHATTAN

It is rather a joke to my artist friends that I would spend my summers here in the city. My fellow-artists would spread far and wide, painting their seascapes and landscapes, and teaching their pupils to do likewise; while I would stay in town, the thermometer in the nineties, sketching my city subjects. For my artist friends, the heat had no more terrors than for the fashionables playing golf in the burning sun; it is to be assumed that the germs were well cooked in both cases.

In the city, the Fourth of July was always a great festival. Fireworks were the order of the night, the moon was blinded by myriads of Roman candles . . . The brass band was the signal for dancing. The mass ceremony carried reminiscences of festivals of ancient times, only the core of tribal rights sustaining the injected

worship, like an everlasting fire still burning in the hearts of transplanted peasants.

I recall one August when for two weeks a killing heat night and day gave New York the aspect of a dead city. During the day hardly anyone moved, even the horse-cars ambled at a snail's pace—no automobiles then to defy the heat. Yet it was a time when the people of New York adjusted themselves to the weather. Only a few left for seashore and mountains; summer camps had not yet been organized. Families worked out their own problems of comfort—life had not yet become a civic concern.

It is not for me to say that conditions are not better in the beautified and sanitary New York of today. Yet I feel that the free play of children is more rare, and I know that picturesque types are seen less often. Almost disappeared are the river piers that gave me inspiration to paint. To do the handsome river parks is simply to copy the landscape architect. To portray the people in them is to follow the catalogue fashions all ready for inspection, styles as pretty as they are changeable. To me the human drama seems to have been diluted, to have become thin and respectable, each girl owning a pair of ruby lips, her big toes protruding properly from her modish shoes.

Even Hell's Kitchen would now be nothing for an O. Henry to render. Under the surface calm, I know that people of character and simplicity, if not of violence, still live there. This more settled psychology my friend Harry Wickey, with his broad human insight, has discovered and commemorated. With the unerring instinct of the real artist, Wickey has gone beneath the surface and made alive for us the prototypes who are the real foundation upon which New York is built.

One may regret the passing of the activities I have depicted in my paintings, though I realize that the transformation has made way for the beauty and unity of the city. The great ocean

liners, jutting out their noses from the new docks, warn that improvements cannot long be deferred. The express highway has made its encroachments, the freight trains have been shoved underground, mercifully Death Avenue is a thing of the past. An old corner junk shop is crumbled away as if in shame at the advent of the ocean liners; even the small boy is seen dragging his shoebox of junk to get in return a few coppers. These days of juvenile barter have almost passed away. No more tiny gold mines in ash heaps, even the ash heaps are gone. The movie theatre has invaded Hell's Kitchen, Bank Night brings its excitement and lure to the neighborhood. The young gamin brings a point of view all his own from which to watch the screen; he will not understand why so much fuss is made over the featured glamor girl—no, for him the Lone Ranger.

A FURTIVE RUSTIC

Nevertheless, it came about that a creature like myself, practically cemented to the city streets, whose notebook haunted the byways, the nooks of tenement alleys and other places where humans swarmed, adventured forth to the village of Carmel, in Putnam County, New York.

My daughter Virginia had not been thriving in the city, and in the summer of 1915 we were advised to try the country air. On the advice of a friend, we explored Carmel, where on Lake Gilead, about a mile from the village, we saw an old house with eighteen acres of land. The thought that our daughter might have the opportunity to romp in all those spacious meadows, led to our buying an acre of this tract and building a small house. During more than twenty years our little old-fashioned house in Carmel has caused my intermittent defections from Manhattan. When our friend, Arthur Egner—who, by the way, has since become a consistent collector of my pictures—came out to visit us, he fell

in love with the virgin hills; with the result that he too chose Carmel for the site of his summer home.

I would need the power of a Fenimore Cooper to depict the natural beauties of Carmel. The setting of his novel, "The Spy," is in the immediate region of our place, and the hero spy of the revolution, Enoch Crosby, is buried in Carmel. There the early American tradition lingers strong. At Smalley's Inn, just lately burned down, George Washington rested on his way to Newburgh. Reminiscent of another epoch, the Drew Theological Seminary at Carmel recalls the old struggle for supremacy between the two Wall Street speculators, Vanderbilt and Drew.

In their seasonal character, my subjects in New York were summer subjects; hence my visits to Carmel might almost be called furtive. It is not that I was insensible to landscape, but that I could not commit myself to it sufficiently while carrying on my studies in the city. This is neither a confession nor an apology; it means simply that my heart was with my work in the city, and artistically, I could not do justice to both places at once.

XII

REVERIE

Midway pauses come and go, reveries bring faces and forms that have been so much a part of our lives . . . Moving masses, weaving compositions that crowd one another in ever-changing shape and size, losing themselves in the recesses of our memory . . . No effort can distinguish them: the beloved faces, the beloved voices are fused in a voiceless agony that enmeshes itself into a sad abstraction. The spirit bows us over the suspended arch of life. Vaguely, we call this spiritual emergence, mysticism . . .

Again closing in on this survey of my life, on the memories that interlock, check and countercheck, I find that time yields mainly the fine attachments of so many friends . . . Friends who have entered the circles of my sympathies, participating in my art activities, if only by a temporary alignment; taking part in my domestic and social life: some whose hands can still be clasped, others who have waved their hands at me in farewell at the crossroads . . . Faces which still smile out of the past, a host of names, a moving picture whose reel runs backwards . . . learned friends wise in art and life . . . men who lived and died by the brush, commemorated or forgotten on the screen of Fame . . . voices eloquent with their vital energy . . . voices of misdirected energy whose blatancy died away in strangled hope . . . men of wholesome vision, contacts of affection and reverie . . . characters who

disassociated themselves from the events around them, marching forth out of step . . . as in a dream, ceaselessly swinging to and fro, low and high, my chariot of thought races in many circles . . . Now and again, the names of these unrecorded ones reveal themselves . . . but their names are too many, too dear . . .

Myself so near the eclipse, I dare not disturb their anonymity . . . To choose at random from this grab-bag of memory, I could pick out a President of the National Academy . . . or a friendly elevator boy who has so often taken me up and down at Carnegie Hall . . . or again a millionaire collector who by an art transaction briefly matched his steps to mine . . . or Busoni, the composer and pianist, who at Greystone struck magic chords while in simple converse with me, a duet of the soul . . . Names and events emerge on the lawn at Greystone . . . A Mozart opera is being produced, with the beautiful Mrs. Untermeyer the hostess . . . I sit with Busoni, his contentment superb . . . Music and flowers, the passions of the Untermyers; hospitality, their routine . . .

Matching it in memory is a party at Mrs. Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's, on her Long Island estate, the artists there a veritable catalog of celebrities, painters and sculptors. I can hardly visualize, let alone describe, the many shifting scenes of our entertainment: sunken pools and gorgeous white peacocks as line decorations spreading into the gardens; in their swinging cages, brilliant macaws nodding their beaks at George Luks as though they remembered posing for his pictures of them; Robert Chanler showing us his exotic sea pictures, blue-green visions in a marine bathroom; and Mrs. Whitney displaying her studio, the only place on earth in which she could find solitude. Here the artists felt at home, the Whitney hospitality always gracious and sincere . . .

XIII

ON A MAGIC CARPET

If in these memories I refrain from details that would amplify my personal difficulties, it is through a deliberate forgetfulness. Why inflict such memoranda at this late day: the factual record of worries extending through so many years; of triumphs that have come now and then, only to become obscured, like medals laid on a shelf?

In the art world of New York, time marches on so rapidly; reputations are like shooting stars—out of sight, out of mind. Fra Angelico, in his monastic cell, enjoyed peacefulness day after succeeding day. His art visions were not interrupted by the radio, the wars that were fought were not broadcast, the telephone did not harass him, and he could paint on serenely. That word “serenely” can now apply only to temperament; in that sense, one may be serene in a subway rush or on a jolting bus—even in an art discussion. But nowadays, one needs a hide like a rhinoceros to remain physically impervious as we go on living more or less in a state of nerves. Placidity for an artist can be only intermittent, at best. More than ever, it is increasingly difficult not to be drawn into the vortex of art activity.

There is an eternal difference of character that marks the idealist from the realist. Imagine, for instance, an artist like Jonas Lie living the monastic life of Fra Angelico. I fancy the organizing

ability of Lie would have shattered those gentle walls, and in no time at all have welded together all the painters, goldsmiths and sculptors into a society under his leadership, with the Pope as Honorary Vice-President, and an annual commemorative dinner, with Francis I as guest of honor. Jonas Lie would have added a still further glitter to the Golden Age . . .

Compressing time once more, we cleave the ocean waves on a Viking ship, manned by a jury of selection bound for an art show in our own times. Louis Bouché, as chairman, stands proudly erect in the prow. Swiftly the men row, singing a popular saga. Standing, with arms folded, Reginald Marsh is moody, disdaining to row with such weaklings. The ship churns the water, annihilating time and space. Norway is left a thousand years behind, dry as dust; the jury walks down 8th Street, in Manhattan, past the Whitney Museum, then solemnly files into The Jumble Shop, assembles at the bar and takes its pledge . . .

As my mood changes, I could weep for the time that has gone, for the friends who have gone. No Viking boat can bring them back, no trans-Atlantic steamer; only by memory can they be restored, and then only one by one and for a few moments, the thought that brings them back taking them again away. Yet there need be no wringing of hands: sorrow and joy are muted twins in these vibrations of the past . . .

Surrendering to my playful dreams, I see Maurice Sterne, a reverent priest of Mount Athos. He has become a superior of the Order, an expert at engrossing precious, illuminated parchments, with stylistic initial letters, the marvelous embellishments enjoyed by the artists of the period . . . Between times, he gazes wistfully at the Italian landscape, at a rustic girl. Prophetically, a composition forms in his mind, his keen instinct telling him that some day an artist would arise to depict this rustic girl in her Italian simplicity and show her to a far-distant time . . . Sud-

denly vespers ring, those capable hands of Maurice Sterne's are folded in silent prayer, and Mount Athos disappears . . .

Now my genii waft me back to the Middle Ages, to a cathedral still in the making. On a lofty platform stand William Zorach and his apprentice, with hammers and chisels, carving the Apostles on a Gothic cathedral . . . From out of the past, my roving thought brings me a commandant sculptor, who could expound his theories of beauty to the gaping yokels, forecasting by centuries the Zorach cult that was to break forth in full publicity in a modern museum . . .

Back and forth on this train of memory, my next astral stop is Venice. Getting out of a gondola in front of a picturesque tavern, I find George Luks in a congenial drinking bout with Casanova. They are discussing the art of Tintoretto, George laying a wager that he is himself a better painter, offering to paint a portrait of Casanova to prove it. The argument continues until they both roll under the table in that Venetian twilight . . . Out on the Piazza of St. Mark's, the pigeons flutter around the figure of Savonarola and John Sloan, earnestly discussing religion and art, each willing to go to the stake for his convictions . . .

Not neglecting another era, my mood carries me back to a theatre in London, where one William Shakespeare is both author and manager. As a courtesy, he has invited a guest company, a selected cast of American artists to play "Much Ado About Nothing," under the personal direction of Everett Shinn. In the pit, Frank Crowninshield and Carl Van Vechten sit on either side of Malvina Hoffman; DeWitt Lockman escorts Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney; and John Taylor Arms hangs on to Queen Elizabeth, anxious to meet these American cousins . . .

In another moment I am at the carnival of Venice . . . I see Paganini dancing a wild fandango with Juliana Force . . . Putnam Brinley, in magnificent brocades, pirouetting with Doris Lee.

XIV

THE WEATHER-VANE TURNS

It was about 1916 that I went with my family to live on 10th Street, next to the church of St. Mark's in-the-Bouwerie. The house, which had been the handsome home of the Delmonicos, was now divided up into quarters for artists and writers. There we formed the Peter Stuyvesant Art Club, using the splendid first floor parlor for our clubroom. The windows looked out over the beautiful grounds of the church, and the burial vaults of the Stuyvesants, the DePuysters, and other aristocrats of early New York. Second Avenue, ever a street of many nations, went past the church, so that we were at the portals of the great East Side, St. Mark's with its English architecture standing like a holy sentinel against invasion.

To Tenth Street came Guy Pène du Bois and his family, Alexander Brook and his talented wife, Peggy Bacon; while other artists also helped to make this a quaint little Latin Quarter of their own. Here in this atmosphere of old New York, we had our teas and our exhibitions of art work. The Armory Show had left our art critics in a daze. The weather-vane had turned and a chilly wind from the East had blown in upon our artists. Reputations began to tumble, incomes to dwindle. Galleries began to bloom with foreign flowers. The era of the modern had set in, our young artists went modern, the dealers went modern, while the Modern

Museum was yet unthought of. It was just before Cézanne's "Four Apples" was to bring \$20,000, \$5,000 an apple while whole orchards painted by American artists went begging. Van Gogh had already cut off his ear, leaving his legacy of paintings for dealers to exploit among American millionaires.

But slowly the clouds began to lift. My works were being placed in museums; and if international publicity passed over my head, American appreciation did not. I was in the same position as other serious American artists, who had to watch the display of foreign artists go by, to be succeeded by other publicized heroes of the brush. In a way, this simplified matters. While the French dealers had the world as their market, here in New York we had only what the French left over for us; but at least we could join in the negro's hymn, that we were "All God's Chillun."

THE ETERNAL TRIANGLE

There is a type of painter who paints, let us say, sailboat pictures; who takes advantage of the vogue of a master, living or dead; who is sought by collectors and is a favorite of art dealers. He follows the primrose path, strutting joyously on his way, leaving to others the danger of being original. High in his own estimation, glorying in his transient publicity, this type of painter is constantly recurring, an unvarying accompaniment to the business side of art. A Daumier could only gaze sadly at this type of artist. With an innate sense of art values and an understanding of the art conditions that surrounded him, Daumier knew that only death would rectify injustice. And, like the French master, our own original artists have seen popular works selling one after another, the art dealers among themselves keeping a watchful tally on sales.

Like the eternal triangle, the relation of the art dealer, the collector and the artist involves for contemporary artists a problem in human drama, in idealistic subtraction. If the dealer could be gently removed, the artist and the collector would be happy ever after.

But the earth is not flat, and the triangle will not dissolve. Tradition will bear no change; and whether the artist or dealer woo the collector, three hearts must beat as one, on a commission

basis. Nevertheless, as the earth moves, our tastes alter. The one movable of the triangle is the artist. He is a replacement feature; there are many clamoring to take his place, if only for the time being. Glamorous those who snuggle into the triangle; in no well-conducted harem can there be too many favorites. One should be proud to be selected; although oriental fatalism should be the password—to have been loved once is better than never to have been loved at all.

No trade secrets are concerned in stating this conflict between art and business. It is the everlasting difference between the art taste that is forced upon the public through what is sold to them, and the taste which the public has yet to form independently by itself. Were this not so, there would be no sad tales of unrecognized genius to cast their pathos over our art history, no great artist to sit among the ashes, or to eat crackers and milk in the same Morris chair that is his bed. The business of selling art is like a juggernaut that rolls over the lone artist whose work is original enough to need that sustained attention which can be seldom given to it. This viewpoint, that a business policy can crush the creative artist, may seem naive. On the other hand, let us remember the fact that the dealer can remain in business only through his sales, not through sympathies, and that he cannot afford to be a philanthropist.

No less human is the problem presented by that other character in the eternal triangle of art, the collector. To have unlimited wealth and to use it in making a collection of old masters may indicate either a true public spirit or merely a desire to shine in reflected glory. Andrew Mellon could purchase a great Rembrandt with the same ease as I might buy an orange; and in Washington the grim spirit of Rembrandt can be viewed alike by the politician and the country at large. Many another collector, too, has acquired works of European art as a beautiful woman acquires a vanity

case. Not all collectors have the wealth that Andrew Mellon had, but many of them have the old master complex, and when they buy reputed masterpieces at prices running into handsome round figures, there is always spectacular publicity. I take my hat off to those collectors whose love of art is so much greater than their pocketbooks, who are qualified to look a living artist in the face—rather than a dead one—in a lofty spirit of cooperation, and willing to pay more for his work, in proportion to their means, than the princes of collectors pay for the works of bygone masters.

In my own relations to both dealers and collectors, perhaps I have been happier in the arms of the collectors; with the dealers, there were too many rivals on the market, higher priced, more attractive and better framed. Yet there are dealers to whom I owe the tribute of a public acknowledgment for their integrity and high purpose towards both the collector and the artist.

While telling of my old studio days, I have already related how William Macbeth became the first dealer to sponsor my work, and how I thrived for a time as a professional painter under his auspices, eventually to be supplanted in his gallery by other artists whose works offered more substantial rewards.

Were self-pity or egotism to urge me on, I might relate the poignant personal history that lies beyond my brief casual treatment of this epoch in my career. But that would hardly be within the purpose of these memoirs. What is past is past, and truth itself can be a double-edged tool. Justice demands consideration also of the art dealer's status and responsibility. When a dealer is confronted with public taste, when he is in fact dependent upon it, he may be as much a victim of conditions as the artist himself.

Only after some years did I lick my wounds sufficiently to take my work to another gallery, this time to the Kraushaar Gallery. Here I had the protection of a fixed policy, a more cosmopolitan

attitude; and though circumstances did not permit this lodgment to become permanent, the nine years of my association with Kraushaar were like Balm of Gilead to my wandering soul.

In 1919 I had an exhibition at the gallery of the Milch brothers, on 57th Street. Here another chapter of my art history might become swollen out of bounds, a bold statement of results might be underscored. I had reason both to crow like a rooster and to sob like Pagliacci, making many friends but finally being doomed to wander forth again. Later, my pictures were hung at the opening of the new galleries of Frank Rehn, on Fifth Avenue. The buoyant Rehn and his collectors went on acquiring my works, and my days were full of gladness. Had my restless destiny at last discovered a haven for me? Was I to become a fixed star of the first magnitude, to settle down in peace to coupon-clipping, between the Morris chair and the telephone to live in surcease, my works no longer divided piecemeal but gathered together in one gallery or another, one exhibition or another? While thus I pondered, I had at least the satisfaction of knowing that those of my pictures which by this time had found their way into museums had come to the end of their wanderings.

XVI

THE NATIONAL ACADEMY

In 1929 I was elected an associate of the National Academy, later becoming a National Academician. This recognition put a significant stamp of approval on my form of expression, which I took as a high honor. The historical importance of the National Academy in American art has been outstanding. Even men like Henri, Bellows and Speicher, who from different motives ceased being represented in its shows, never resigned from the Academy, which on occasion broadmindedly still exhibits their works. It may be the fault of the American public, who had the power to give the Academy a greater amplitude, but instead made this institution a victim of the public's own limitations, turning the scales in favor of the great masters of France and thus making the latter the measuring rod of values.

The Altman prizes I received at the Academy were distinctly felt by me as a high American honor, given by a jury who were not esthetic cosmopolitans in their tendencies or determined by group associations. Even Henry McBride has admitted the justice of their awards; and Cortissov, the wise and tolerant critic, could always find much to praise at the Academy, at the same time that he could question the over-praised experiments that swamped our over-hospitable galleries.

XVII

THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Generally, the vicissitudes of the poor artist are supposed to spur him on, a delightful fiction devised on the same basis as "Blessed are the poor, for they shall inherit the kingdom of Heaven." This would be consolation for the poor artist if, like Elijah, he were fed by the ravens; but the Automat and landlords are birds of another feather.

Sentimentally, an angel in art is a kind person who casts protecting wings over an artist in distress. Optimistically, I hope that this happens often; although in life as I happen to know it, the angel is more apt to put his bankbook back of an art dealer on 57th Street or to succumb to the salesmanship of a man or woman whose ego appealingly invokes the angelic spirit to capitalize his or her effort. Yet, fairly enough, there are outstanding exceptions—a Mrs. Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, for instance, whose ample purse has epitomized the spirit of many angels here and abroad, whose munificence coupled with her reticence is a golden legend in our art annals. No doubt there have been many artists who have been aided by her benefactions, which have been unknown to the public but life-sustaining to the artist.

This brings me naturally to another art perspective of New York, to the Whitney Museum of American Art, which since its inception has transformed several fine old houses into its present

dignified structure on Eighth Street. In its intimate galleries, painting and sculpture have always been shown to the highest advantage. In addition to collecting masters of modern America, the Whitney Museum has sponsored the younger artists to an unparalleled degree. From this high intention of Mrs. Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, there bloomed the previews, the receptions that for years continued as joyous reunions, where artists could meet one another and be entertained in a purely democratic atmosphere, without social distinctions.

For me, as for others, these occasions were always heart-warming adventures. My memories of them impel me to let chronology out the window; for age and youth intermingled without reservation as year after year we came together, tacitly ignoring or graciously smiling away any noted changes of appearance. Unlike the members of the National Academy, the artists who gathered at Mrs. Whitney's receptions had no links of membership, no election of officers, no high-ranking president, none of the historical ear-marking that formal institutions like the Academy automatically involve. Yet for me there is an affinity between these two New York institutions, despite their different positions in the art world. For me, they are both of my city. My regard for my confreres of the National Academy is balanced by my affection for those who sponsor the Whitney Museum and for so many of the artists exhibiting there.

XVIII

A TWIST OF HISTORY'S TAIL

An amusing trick of fate has made me the target of a twofold resemblance, to two men born centuries apart. Beginning with my own era, on countless occasions I have been taken for Paderewski. At concerts, I have been asked to autograph programs; and truck drivers have yelled "Paddy" at me, a revelation of the famous pianist's reputation among plain people and of their knowledge of his appearance.

My more significant resemblance to Rembrandt has been noted by artists, who are naturally more familiar with the Rembrandt self-portraits. With this resemblance to Rembrandt, my concern strikes much deeper roots. If only I could trace back the past, step by step, to the time when my ancestors lived in Holland. As I understand, the family name had been Van Kirk before it was changed to Myers when my forebears went to England, why I know not; and Professor Starr Myers, of Princeton, once told me the name was changed to Van Meer, although he did not know why, either.

Thus, when I try to climb back into my family tree I get rather lost among the branches. But taking my resemblance to the Dutch master as a starting point, a further fact is that just as he went to live in the Dutch ghetto, so I too went to study in the ghetto—that of our own East Side. Again like Rembrandt, I too have

made many self-portraits, which, even though they might not support my theory in point of merit, at least show the same atavistic tendency. Moreover, I have my flighty moments, as I am sure Rembrandt had his; and I also would like to decorate my wife with jewels, if I had any, as he adorned his Saskia. Still further, if I have not painted a "Night Watch," I too have had trouble with sitters. And finally, if Rembrandt were to have seen my "End of the Walk," I like to believe that he would have opened a bottle of schnapps to toast the picture—or at least would have been considerate enough not to roast it. At any rate, all this makes out a circumstantial case upon which to select an ancestor, with some shred of plausibility and a whimsical twist of history's tail. It may be that Rembrandt's Dutch courage has sustained me, even as his art has inspired me. On faith and as an atavistic liberty, I have adopted him as an exemplar. I like to believe that had my difficulties been his, had he been exposed to the hectic contacts of New York, he would have acted much as I have. In an environment of art comprising works from the four quarters of the globe and steeped in a spirit of commercialism, any originality of expression against the dead weight of the past is more than a dangerous luxury.

The adversities of Rembrandt were but logical for his times. If in some ghostly vision he were to be faced with the same problems that I have had, the myriad art of today, the same landlords, the same dealers, and above all the manipulated tastes of today—then he would be thankful that destiny had placed him in the simple days of old Holland. Were Rembrandt living and working among us here and now, he would be told that his pictures are too low in tone; fault would be found with his subjects; he would find the young generation of artists infinitely more art-wise. He would lose an argument with a Max Weber, who would dance verbal rings around him; and the rich American's adoration of

foreign names would likely lead him to drown his sorrows in drink. His Saskia would have incessant troubles over the studio rent; she would probably insist on living in Woodstock. His housekeeper would belong to a union, things would go bad, and his "Night Watch" would go by default into storage and be sold, sight unseen.

XIX

PLEASANT RECOLLECTIONS

Along Fifth Avenue, just above Washington Square, the city still has—in this year of 1940—the atmosphere of aristocratic old New York. For me, an air of reminiscence hangs over it like an aroma of earlier days. On the west, the old Tenth Street studio building bounds this section, the roster of its former artist-tenants studding our records for several generations: J. Alden Weir, Thomas Dewing, William M. Chase, and John La Farge, the latter's mural in the Church of the Ascension on lower Fifth Avenue framing these associations.

The studio home of William Glackens, on Ninth Street just off Fifth Avenue, partook of the charm of this fine, boasted period. It was a delightful privilege for my wife and me to participate occasionally in the at-homes of the Glackens during the season. Surrounded by the masterpieces of William Glackens, friends would gather in congenial remembrance: Edith Glackens, always an amusing hostess; William Glackens, quietly reminiscing with his companions. The young Glackens, Leonna and Ira, filled out the family picture, happy with their young artist friends, as well as with older friends who had known them since childhood. Of the latter were Everett Shinn and Guy du Bois; Wallace Morgan and Harry Dart, both of whom worked with me in the old New York *Herald* art department; May Wilson Preston, the

Johannsons; and many other celebrities of New York's art life, reunited in informal pleasure, the whole scene imbued with the spirit of a New York that is now passing.

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My memory carries me back many years, to about 1902, to another home, another family, to children I watched growing up. There was no elegance about the simple little apartment on East 25th Street, two blocks above the old Art Students League, where John Gillet and his family of four daughters had their unpretentious home. Mrs. Gillet was a second wife, a butcher's daughter he had married in London, who took compassion on this poor widower with his motherless girls and, in addition to keeping house, held a job as cashier in a restaurant. Her unbounded energy was more than a blessing to Gillet; she took the care of the children off his mind and he was able tranquilly to pursue his work. Gillet was a man of culture in a quaint, old-fashioned way. As a young artist, he had known the great Corot. He would tell me many tales of those days in France while I would watch him painting his enamels, as Renoir painted in his youth, with a spherical globe filled with water that reflected the light on his work as perhaps the French master himself may have done.

Here was a home where a lonely bachelor like myself was always welcome. The Gillets were always ready to share a crust with me. The children and I were great friends; they made me join in their little games, and for years their place was a restful source of recreation. As time again worked its changes, I gradually lost track of the Gillets, they became but another memory; until a year or so ago I received a postal card with a few whimsical words, "Sign from a nonagenarian." I knew it to be none other than the sign of John Gillet.

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The studio of Harry Wickey at Cornwall Landing, New York,

sits on the mountainside, with the Storm King high above it. Below, the Hudson flows on, as majestically as when J. F. Kensett, Durand, and other painters of the Hudson River School first put its glories on canvas, with a fidelity and a charm that have passed out of present rendition—pictures for the New York homes that housed them, now become museum pieces.

Amid Wickey's countless art studies, his lithographs, prints and drawings, his sculptured forms of humans and animals, we would gather for our rare conferences, self-appointed cabinet ministers assembled to discuss the nation's art problems. The dinners, under the supervision of Maria Wickey, were always a prelude to an animated exchange of ideas, impromptu dissertations in which the local, national and international fields of art were combed and scraped and analyzed to the hair's breadth. Many a halo of reputation was carefully removed and reassigned impartially, we felt, even though we thought they would better fit our own heads.

Then Harry Wickey would stretch his powerful figure on the floor; the rest of us would form a magic circle around him; and the oracles, each in turn, would expound their verdicts and prophecies on art. Untouched by printers' ink were these virgin pamphlets, born to blush unseen here in the air of these now lost dialogues. Near Wickey, his five handsome dogs were silent but observant partners. Their sympathetic eyes upon us, these animals, who had so often posed for their master, listened attentively; their heads between their paws, it seemed to me that whenever the word "art" was mentioned, they would prick up their ears.

The dynamic Dr. Harry Shapiro added his share to our symposiums, a laughing but keenly sympathetic philosopher. Among my friends, Dr. Harry H. Shapiro is one of the most vibrant persons I have known. His life is one of many phases and attainments, each of them admirable: a scientist who has been honored for his researches, a composer of music of rare beauty, a lover of folk tunes

who has inspired choral groups to lift their voices in communion at Christmas in a glorious hymn of praise. In his understanding and practical appreciation of the work of his many artist friends, Dr. Shapiro has acquired a collection that helps to carry the message of art to the public. As is again manifest in his own beautifully written verses, the guiding star in the life of Dr. Shapiro is his genuine love for humanity.

At these gatherings we spoke to one another for ourselves, each delivering his message from an imaginary throne. Sometimes the talks would last into the early hours of the morning. In our kingdom of thought, there was no distinction between that mountain-side studio and the Royal Academy of London, from whose platform Sir Joshua Reynolds delivered his seven discourses on art. Not more august than Harry Wickey stretched on his studio floor, smoking a cigarette, one might imagine Delacroix himself sitting among us with his French pipe, stroking one of the animals he loved so well, storing up notes for his diary. Maria Wickey presided at these occasions, adding her own serious reflections, with my wife, Ethel, rounding out the picture.

To this same studio, where the latch was seldom closed, many came from Cornwall and Newburgh for art inspiration. It was through Harry Wickey that the Hudson and Highland Art Association invited me to give a lecture. It was among my first talks on art, but I was well received and, in addition, well paid, fêted and entertained, as though I were Charles Dickens or Walt Whitman. People of Cornwall and Newburgh, I salute you for your kindness and appreciation.

ORIGINALITY IN ART

Reputations cluster like grapes on the ever-broadening vines of the promoters of art; they first flourish in the French hinterland and are then transplanted at great expense to American soil. Is it all a matter of fashion? Cézanne was just as original before he became a fashion. Picasso had not to wait for death to be glorified, to dance atop two continents. Are American millionaires anti-American? Or are they wise men of Gotham?

Are our critics victims of the French horn, of names in high places, while the public, divided between ignorance and indifference, looks on in puzzlement? Is all this progress or does it make for a new economy in which the restorer will become unnecessary? These are the simple questions of a simple artist.

What is originality in art? How does one perceive it? Is it something an artist may know by himself—or can it be known only to a critic? Is it something the artist does unconsciously, the force of expression welding itself into a new form? Or is it an aggregation from different sources, designedly different, like an endless game of chess—form, color, design, even size, becoming infinitely adjustable? Is originality impelled by feeling or instinct, subtle yet simple? Or is it the synthetic combination of an art-wise producer?

To be one's self in art is to take stock of one's knowledge, to subject it to the laboratory test of one's natural intelligence, and

with this equipment to approach the phase of life one cares for. To say this is like saying that virtue is its own reward; for to be one's self in art amounts to voluntary exile in the far-flung field of art cosmopolitanism, with all its critical implications. In this respect, I am thinking of those artists whose interest to critics depends entirely on their infusion of qualities associated with foreign names; the clue is on the surface, the clue to their inspiration, to their failure to be themselves. To the intellectual, the yardstick of trans-Atlantic culture justifies the thesis of our vassalage.

It is lonesome work to be one's self, and more and more a lonesome road to remain so. In purity of intention, there can be no progress. We speak of periods in the continuity of art. In reality, there are no periods; only artificial ones, built up by indulgence and lack of spiritual responsibility. The duty of an artist consists in being honest, in working without fear, even—alas!—without hope; in being himself, even in sorrow and pain, because it is his own nature; in finding his own different expression.

When I left behind me the mere vanities of art to make myself a humble observer, I knew that my subject matter was too great for any academical treatment. Pomp and ostentation would be cheap before the natural dignity of the life I saw. The record must be of the spirit, guided by the spirit. Very simple must be the heart, and therefore simple the pencil. There is little we can do, there is much we should not do. In art, quantity is deceptive. It is better to abstain, in order really to attain. This was the aim of Flaubert, in another medium, in expressing the life of his day, as it was also the aim of our own Walt Whitman. It was only by losing myself in the crowds I loved to depict, forgetting all the super art culture, forgetting myself in the joy of impersonal reactions, that I became the sharer of unlimited natural emotions. The meaning of art ceased to be an intellectual puzzle; it became something simple, human.

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Paradoxically, an artist should be given credit as well for the work he has not done as for what he has actually executed. What he has painted out may attest the value of the finished work; it may indicate the research, the unfinished work of an unfinished master, the toilsome effort to conquer a personal expression that will completely convey the artist's full intent. When an artist produces work after work with the same suavity, the same satisfaction with the means employed, he suggests a Christopher Columbus running a ferry-boat on schedule.

It is of the nature of fine art work that it is rare. It is a thing exceptional, produced in a favorable conjunction of mood and circumstance; in contrast to mere technical skill, a continuous exhibition of which is only a false luster on the face of art.

Childe Hassam, a brilliant but incessant painter, was painting still another landscape from nature when Alden Weir said, in his genial way, "Well, Muley, I see you're still pumping nature."

I have often thought of that word "pumping," not only in the sense in which Weir addressed Hassam, but in general relation to the process of pumping away more or less blindly to get results—results that lead to such an accumulation that it becomes at times an acute problem to those concerned. Almost at random, an artist can become a subject for exploitation by the multitude through methods of publicity, which extol him in terms of greatness. There are artists who have pumped away so strenuously that their production is an open challenge to the speculator. Only too often does such production become the very stuff of which contemporary art reputations are made, in our cash-and-carry system of art barter.

The artist who is merely a skilled craftsman needs no new ideas to cover his canvas, no new feelings, sometimes not even new models. This can be true of all forms of art, even of the abstract.

Given the direction, there can be the same trail of dull effort, the same futile lack of originality; no deep water to ford—only the little creek to cross, arriving safe and sound and almost dry.

Such effort consists in conforming to the times, in following a style that belongs more or less to a mass movement in art, in letting the signature furnish the only differentiation. No two fingerprints are exactly the same. Nor are two pictures, but in idea they may be alike as two peas in a pod.

XXI

ART AND PROPAGANDA

In the realm of art, there are no nationals. In our admiration the great figures of art stand aloof from the warring contentions that shook their countries. Even though the artists might have been participants themselves, their creations are above the tragic human errors that usually mar the history of their countries.

In the presence of true art, propaganda is dumb and useless. Yet during the World War some of our artists permitted themselves to be impressed into the atrocious service of making pictures to stir up resentment, blindly participating in an organized campaign of hatred under the banner of a frenzied patriotism. I have always regretted that George Bellows, for example, put his signature to this kind of inflammatory work.

I can understand a Howard Chandler Christy picturing Christ for the Red Cross posters. I can even understand an artist giving up his life for his country—but not his art. The artist had better undertake to serve his country as Goya served his, in his etchings of Spanish horrors. Goya did not give up his art to war; instead, he delivered war to his art, and his work continues to live as a scathing arraignment. I can accept the use of past wars as subject matter for artists, though I personally cannot sympathize with any glorification of them. And as for modern warfare, its qualities become less and less picturesque as mechanical engines of destruction usurp the most decisive roles, leaving hardly anything fit for rendering in art.

XXII

WHY NOT BE AN ARTIST?

Today, an overwhelming art culture goes on in these United States: private and public art classes, art lectures, art publications, art books in every drug store on how to do anything appertaining to art, demonstrations on how to paint, how to carve, how to etch, how to do this and how to do that, even by correspondence—all in the name of spreading the sacred flame.

In the light of all this presumption, a natural gift is at a discount. Period tricks of technique are hawked about; little is left of the sacred flame. Never before was a generation so inveigled into looking at art work without knowing what it is all about. In this nation-wide welter of performers, young and old, true standards are almost choked to death. Other standards prevail that are more suited to the machine-age of art, the so-called democracy of art—as if art itself were democratic, common.

One remembers Michelangelo and his ivory tower, where his dreams of the Sistine Chapel were designed through years of toilsome nights. Now we have the Towers of Babel and the confusion of unformed styles, styles devised overnight to show next day to whatever public is left of those who are not themselves practicing art. Awake and paint! Why not? Why not have a career—be an artist! Some time ago, young ladies and gentlemen who painted bravely in the leading art schools, where fundamentals were dis-

pensed with, betook themselves to Greenwich Village. Like Gauguin hastening to Tahiti and going native, they immediately painted the family mahogany a blue color, and then around their blue bureaus hung their cockeyed backsides of nudes. A Latin Quarter with all the trimmings: street shows of paintings and whatnots, exposed to and imposed upon the curious; women old enough to know better, pathetically seizing the opportunity to express themselves, some of them skillful enough fakers, others so lacking in skill yet so serious; paintings impaled on iron fences, art so democratic and so cheap, an outlet of the gutter. (And yet one did sometimes find a pearl there, as one might find a fake in an art palace on 57th Street.) There was the Boulevard, 8th Street, with its independent females, Russian jewelry, foreign art books to guide the art taste of the élite away from the alleged dangers of the American way, urging one to hang on to a French background even when one should be doing the American scene; although there were some simple souls who really went native, whose ashcans were of genuine metal.

Well, what is art? Something to look up to, or something to look at? Something to do and do and keep on doing, whether on your own resources or not? Many a secret is buried in a frame, and many a frame is buried in secret.

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At a large social reception, I once met a young woman whom I knew to be an artist, extremely talented, one who could model and paint as fluently as a bird sings. I asked her when she was going to exhibit her work. "Do you really think I should?" Looking at me very thoughtfully, she added, "Tell me, what woman has ever been really important in art—an artist of the first magnitude? I know that now some women artists are considered important, but they never do anything that a man could not do better in the long run. Why should I have an illusion?"

"All men are not great," I answered, "yet they find the utmost satisfaction in being artists, just as women do. And besides, if women did not study art, what would become of our art schools? And of our art teachers?" My young friend said she was not referring to a social problem.

Through the gates of art, women have been forming an endless procession for several decades; often at our exhibitions, if you did not note the name, you would not know the artist's sex. As Eve was fashioned out of Adam's rib, it probably makes no difference. Whatever their origin, we have serious women artists, clever ones, idealistic ones, a variety that matches the variety among men. The painter's smock fits both sexes. With man and woman equally, energy can run riot in the manipulation of the brush, the pencil or the chisel. My young friend may have been probing too far back into the past. For all I know, the female genius of art may be working around the corner at this very moment.

XXIII

BEYOND THE EASEL

Fiction has always been my favorite reading. From great fiction I would get an intensification of interest in lives and places and eras. In time, an immense number of fictional incidents sank into my consciousness so deeply as to stand out even more vividly than the actual happenings of my own life. This contrast comes doubly home to me now as I scan my memory; I find how meagerly I can recall the scenes of my own life, in comparison with those portrayed in the fiction I have read. The characters and scenes of books, so indelibly impressed, have given my life a vaster pattern, the opportunity of living in a mansion of many rooms.

This accent on the inner emotional life is well-nigh universal. In the subway the stenographer reads her novel, thus priming herself with romance to meet the daily grind; just as detective stories, in turn, serve her employer.

Back in my youth, I was once on a ladder painting the side of a frame house on Third Avenue. But mentally I was atop Notre Dame, with Esmeralda and the terrible Quasimodo. Like a soothing refrain, fiction has always accompanied the uncongenial labors I had to endure through so many of my years. When we are young, we are told fairy stories to excite our interest. If real life is not sufficient in our youth, why should it be later? Imagination nourished by fiction has been the golden thread of my life. Bare facts are but bare life; put a pretty dress on a child—ribbons and

ornaments—and life becomes decorative. I was on a ladder painting a frame house; yes, but at the same time I was on another ladder leading to the imagination. When the painting was finished, my visions continued; even as now they continue when I am through painting a canvas.

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The government has always had a keen interest in those who select the skillful but highly dangerous game of counterfeiting as a way of making a living. Yet the same government is blandly indifferent to, or even unconscious of, the lively gentlemen who dispose of pictures with a well-known signature as the sole proof of genuineness. Bogus works of art, the stock-in-trade of these fellows, are innocently reposing in art collections throughout the country.

Once I met one of these merry gentlemen. He was rather proud of his exploits and regaled me with some stories, one of which I shall outline. It concerned a hatter of Danbury, Connecticut, who had a consuming ambition to become a great collector. However, he disdained the traditional method of picking up one work of art after another; instead, he had the idea of getting great bargains by buying a quantity of art works at a time—the volume principle. This proclivity of his became well-known; and to make the most of him, the bogus art dealers built up a little comedy that needed only one performance. A young woman was pressed into service. After renting an uptown apartment for her, they gave her the role of a widow whose husband had left a fine collection of pictures, which in her circumstances she was compelled to dispose of. The hatter of Danbury was brought to meet the weeping widow and see the masterpieces. Here was a wonderful opportunity to acquire at one fell swoop a wholesale addition to his gallery. Thousands of dollars changed hands; the pictures and the Danbury hatter both were framed and delivered.

XXIV

ART AND YOUTH

Among the young artists whom I have tried to guide in their formative years, there are some whose views have altered with the changes in practical conditions. As their natures responded to these considerations, these artists have created opportunities for themselves and achieved worldly success. Measuring the difference between the self-denial that is the essence of a personal art statement, and the realistic opportunism that makes for monetary success, they gradually threw off the disguise of youthful idealism. In doing so, they passed out of the realm of my artistic friendship.

These defections leave me bare of material; unless I am to comment, even though in an impartial spirit, on artists who have achieved a success that I cannot myself admire. Though I naturally wish to avoid being accused of a jealousy I do not feel, for me to write of the conspirant elements that are productive of such success would serve only to advertise them. Success of that kind will automatically advance regardless of me, especially as it is based on a natural self-preservation.

To encourage youth is our national slogan. The visible results are our pride and joy. Why harp on the extravagances of an art reduced to a social empiricism? There is the professional teacher who has led young artists for long years, who has watched them follow his theories and pillow their heads on the public. Such a teacher would be embarrassed to make any distinctions were he

to write monographs of his pupils; he would, perforce, have to throw a blanket of approval over many or else confess to general failure.

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I have never made a fetish of technique. I may say that my methods in painting are embedded in my past experience; so that if a student asked me to explain them, I would almost be compelled to tell him in reply the story of my life.

I cannot lay down any fixed procedure. My individual needs had to find their own solution.

My art life has been a gradual, natural development. Hence, I am not able to record dramatically how at a certain moment in my career I was suddenly inspired to a new viewpoint by the mastermind of a teacher or the masterwork of another artist. Nor, for the same reason, can I tell any romances of conversion, of the shackles of tradition falling away, of a personal art being reborn to carry on a new gospel.

In retrospect, I know only of the very gradual absorption of impressions by subconscious degrees—a fusion of life and fancy. This selective activity, guided by an inner vision, set up within me a protective barrier against the imposition of traditional teachings that make for standardized art values. What causes, directly or indirectly, brought about the continuity of my personal art seem forgotten. Therefore I cannot properly understand the value of imposing arbitrary statements upon another, whose life is lived under entirely different conditions. To me, definitions of art were always futile; for each problem, it was a necessity to be met that stimulated my mental activities. For me, it has been more precious to retain the vague dreams of my childhood than to cultivate those sharpened viewpoints that in art are the medium of exchange. I leave the glory of transmission to such inspired art teachers as Robert Henri, John Sloan and Harry Wickey.

OLD CATALOGS

Old art catalogs, like pressed flowers preserved, have for me a sentimental interest. Musing over them, I can recreate the glory that was, the glory that has waned: names that are edged with the high desire of history, unwritten biographies of the near-great, the ebb and flow of publicity, tradition ensconced in forms. . . . Now a particular catalog reflects the thrill of my being a prize-winner . . . the congratulations, the handshakes . . . a hero for the moment, the dream of the studio come true . . . a momentary flash of the Golden Age. . . .

A catalog of a Whitney Museum exhibition recalls a scene differing in personalities, in atmosphere: less traditional, artists younger—then if not now; stars who advanced, bravely presenting a common front, taking their share of public attention, meeting in good fellowship under the benign protection of Juliana Force. Here biographies were in order, the catalogs extending names unknown, reaching afar in their benevolent inclusion—the Dust Bowl of the West, the slums of Chinatown—all meeting on Eighth Street.

These annual catalogs, in a minor way, mark the flight of time. The stars that shone so brightly may now flicker, the adventurer may become the conservative. But history runs its course on Eighth Street as on 57th Street; and in the truth of art that finally prevails, it is only the history of the individual that counts.

XXVI

PANORAMA

Marking off the successive formative influences on American art that I have witnessed in my time, the first was the French school of Jean Paul Laurens and Gérôme, which was just beginning to fade away in this country when I began my career. This school was based on careful, fine draughtsmanship. I well remember its appeal to me, until it was counteracted by my study of the drawings of the old masters, as well as by the influence of the Munich school of painting, of which Duveneck remains our classic example.

Then came the twin expatriated Americans, Whistler and Sargent, with Carolus Duran and others in the background; and later Manet and the impressionists, with the backwash of Velasquez, who became an idol for certain Americans. The works of these schools gave our exhibitions at that time a European complexion. Alongside the gallant pictures, the small and often exquisite genre productions of the Hudson River School looked antiquated to the student.

There followed a long lull in European influence. Art conditions here were fairly stable, and American reputations continued to advance; until the influx of European work again mounted, culminating in the deluge of the Armory Show in 1913. The vast blur of modernism hid from view those American artists who were working in their native idiom; and as their number became grad-

ually fewer, they were driven further and further off the main line of art traffic.

This brings me to the threshold of today. All the multiform art productions of the present have countless roots and off-shoots. Instead of a few writers and critics, there are now countless writers who are critics, critics who are writers, artists who are writers, critics who are artists—an intricate pattern of mass production. It would be idle for me to attempt seriously to analyze the state of art today. It is in the making or unmaking, according as one views it. I pass this question by without reluctance, for I am only interested in the history of the individual artist.

XXVII

AMONG MY CONTEMPORARIES

Although I am thoroughly aware that I have lived through many years of a momentous period in American art—it may be the most important in results, as well as implications—I am aghast at the futility of my memory and at my lack of data. My archives consisting of but a few scattered fragments, I deplore the consequent lack of straightforward continuity for these memoirs. Each year had its host of names, of artists who were joint exhibitors; merely to name them would fill a catalog, and to comment on them would be an endless theme. It may well be that the names I admired most would not always represent those who were most congenial. Even were I inclined to be critical, the black border of death would confine my comments within limits; hence these fragmentary portraits I dedicate as expressions of affection, tributes to friends who have lived with me on the same frontier of devotion to art.

GEORGE ACHESON

Somewhere about 1904 I became acquainted with George Acheson, who at that time was collecting pictures by then well-known American artists. His collection grew as he acquired picture after picture, until eventually he added a fine gallery to his house. Like an ideal collector, he would first meet the artist personally. His interest in my work led to a warm friendship, which

has always continued. We often went to his house, where we viewed his pictures and enjoyed his hospitality. Once we went there to attend the wedding of one of his daughters. The ceremony was performed against a background of pictures banked with flowers. George was a smiling, happy host. After the ceremony, the minister, a portly cleric, the acme of respectability, walked up and down the gallery, blandly looking at marines by Paul Dougherty, still lifes by Emil Carlson, landscapes by Ernest Lawson and Arthur Davies, and works by many other noted painters of the time. Suddenly the minister turned to George and, complacently putting his fingers together, remarked, "Ah, I see you have a painter in the family."

BRYSON BURROUGHS

It was at the Art Students League that Bryson Burroughs and I first became friends, our friendship to become still closer upon his subsequent return from Europe, where a Paris scholarship had taken him for a while. When he married Edith Woodman, their home in Flushing was open house to us. Bryson and I would take long walks in the nearby woods, discussing our art problems; Bryson speaking from his own cultured viewpoint, his love for the Grecian myths, which he later composed so beautifully for his subject matter. Although he peopled his own canvases with the antique world, he sympathized deeply with my paintings of the living, crowded city.

I know that he was my champion on juries, when I was first coming to public attention; I owed more to him even than I realized. When we formed our studio coterie, he was one of our finest spirits in zest and enthusiasm. He had a keen perception of originality in art, whether in drawing or in other forms. Later he became curator of paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but he still kept up his painting and held exhibitions of his

own. During the rest of his life, our meetings became fewer; and now that I can no longer shake his hand, I make this all too inadequate tribute to a dear friend.

KENYON COX

Kenyon Cox belongs eminently to the traditions of my student days. At his art lectures I remember his eulogies of Michelangelo. Once he remarked that the master slept with his boots on—which sounds so much more imposing than to sleep with one's shoes on, as I have done. In our life classroom at the old Art Students League, there was a study by Kenyon Cox of a nude girl with red hair, a magnificent example, in oils, of vital life in the raw, an unforgettable canvas. It had a hole in it when I last saw it, and I do not know what became of it.

In his mature work, however, Kenyon Cox sought for classic dignity; I remember a picture of his, called "The Flight of the Ideal," that seemed to me a symbol of his aspirations. For myself, on the contrary, it was the earth that was attractive, the depicting of humans of my choice. Yet my study of the antique at art school made me sympathetic to this earnest devotee of classicism. Somehow, I think of Kenyon Cox and St. Gaudens as similar spirits. I believe they were great friends, men who both loved antique grandeur; although St. Gaudens was able to surmount the changing tastes of which Cox was more the victim.

Kenyon Cox was a scholarly teacher. In his emphasis on construction—form, always form—he was seriously pedantic, resenting any freedom of art expression that had not this groundwork. Yet he represented an epoch of art that had inherited virtues, whose gestures were grand if formal, whose ideas of beauty belonged to the period. I was only a student then, but in my longing to depict actual life I rather recoiled from these classic inhibitions, although

AMONG MY CONTEMPORARIES

I have never lost my respect for the ideals they stood for in the teachings of Kenyon Cox.

GUY PÈNE DU BOIS

Guy Pène du Bois has long been the auditor of my thoughts on art and life. Our contacts were so pleasurable and profitable. So often in his charming home circle, over our coffee, we would spend hours together, analyzing art conditions, forecasting the careers of various artists then commanding the spotlight, as well as of others whose light shone less brightly. I regret that I made no notes of our talks, for to me they were always an inspiration.

Guy was then the noted art critic—and painter; and even later, when he became the noted painter, he was still the art critic as well, coining his brief aphorisms with a dash of cosmopolitan cynicism, cool wisdom and dry humor. I regretted the intervention of his trips abroad; but our intimate conversations were resumed whenever opportunity afforded, Guy remaining as ever my real spiritual comrade. He was always a wise friend, a wise teacher, the possessor of an individual and rare skill in painting, his life a notable one, his contacts illustrious. I envy him only all that his history entails in names and places, covering so much of our present art history. Guy Pène du Bois has grasped the problems of art and life, and by sheer intellect has unified them successfully.

JAMES EARLE FRASER

To James Earle Fraser I offer a tribute of friendship and admiration, as an artist whose genius is self-contained, whose unhurried sculpture has measured up to the highest standards, works worthy of the important public surroundings in which they are placed. In contrast, at one of our New Society exhibitions, I vividly recall his bust of a man, a head of surprising expressiveness that showed Fraser's power in more intimate portrayals. I can speak

ARTIST IN MANHATTAN

of him as a friend, thoughtful and helpful, with kind discrimination, who could leave a momentous task of his own to do a generous deed for a fellow-artist.

POP HART

When I first met Pop Hart, about 1900, he had embedded himself in the studio that nestled on the slopes of the Palisades, in the tiny village of Coytesville, overlooking the lights of Fort Lee on the banks of the Hudson River. His first travels took him around the States, painting those famous Durham tobacco billboards, in which he dramatized the rampant bull snorting defiance of all competition. It was appropriate that when he began to sketch landscapes, he had a passion for collecting cigar boxes to paint on. At that time, his companions were the Dirks Brothers and Tom Powers, all cartoonists.

Pop himself had quite a humorous vein, a most amusing talent for impersonations, with which he regaled his friends. Later on, an urge for travel, which was never to leave him, took him to far-off places; a globe-trotter, he wandered to the South Seas, Egypt, Cuba and Mexico, recording their varied scenes with his brush and etching needle. Somehow, his trips to Mexico produced a legend of a beautiful Indian princess, a romance that he did not deny, although it seemed to have become buried in an intentional twilight. Moreover, the vast output of Pop Hart precluded the idea of a lingering dalliance under the spell of a Mexican moon. Of all his varied subjects, his "Cockfight," with all its shrill activity, strikes a note of defiance that was the ruling motif of the career of Pop Hart.

BERTRAM HARTMAN

While Bertram Hartman had his studio in MacDougal Alley, a congenial group of artists used to have friendly meetings there,

to study models and work in an exhilarating art atmosphere that had a piquant suggestion of the Latin Quarter of Paris. Over these sessions Hartman presided with his rare combination of austerity and humor. There was always a responsible seriousness in his own work, and a kindly tolerance and appreciation of the work of other artists. In highly ingenious costumes, he and his wife were always a picturesque pair at the Kit Kat revels and at the Artists' Balls held in the old Webster Hall.

Memory may have given a seductive glamor to these revelries, but the later affairs, those of the Beaux Arts variety, held in the great hotels, seemed so much less personal. The model in bronze paint appeared too much like the lily that has been gilded, and the expensive costumes were more theatrical than heart-warming.

These earlier affairs may long ago have fallen under the censors' ban, or perhaps the students are now of a different type. In any event these are lively recollections of a flaming youth that time has cooled, conceding to a younger generation the right to gambol as the fashion allows.

Hartman carries on his art, a serious conscientious art that one must esteem.

CHILDE HASSAM

In the army of artists, Childe Hassam was like a major general, covered with medals and honors, with stripes of long service. He commanded the art dealers, issuing his orders of the day, supervising the galleries, a general whose word was law to 57th Street. He was an artist to salute for his excellent record, in full possession of his power of production and—what is a major point—with a keen knowledge of distribution, the tactical ability to place his work.

Hassam was physically powerful, a full-blooded man whose egotism was justified by his long and unquestioned success. Too

good a craftsman to be an innovator, he never groped that I can remember. Boldly he lifted the impressionistic painting of his day and carried it on his broad shoulders, taming it to his canons of good taste, confident in his superiority, and not averse to bluntly stating that belief. Between us there was a gulf of income. Our meetings were pleasant, though casual. I could but marvel at his efficiency, and then go my simple way.

Childe Hassam seems to me to represent an aristocracy of American art that has passed away, one might say our Golden Period—for reputations, high remuneration and consistent evaluations. It was the day when American collectors were proud of their compatriots' work, when auction sales were competitive struggles for the ownership of American celebrities. These great auctions had all the keen interest of a horse race. How many thousands would this bring? . . . What was the last price? . . . The applause when the bidding shot up higher and higher.

EUGENE HIGGINS

Eugene Higgins carries my memory back many years. When he first returned from Paris with his paintings of tragic peasants, their backs bent with woe, his powerful paint in strong silhouettes, his works seemed to me at first like imported tragedy. Gradually, however, he came into his own with a consistent fusion of subject matter and style; and his pictures appeared like grim epics of ancient Erin, seen from a Paris garret.

Underneath the surface of our differing works, Eugene Higgins and I have had a sympathy of aims. We were often brought together through many art groups and our friendship has long been constant.

ROCKWELL KENT

In a momentary spirit of antiquarianism, I think of Blake, an artist who was so concerned with heaven in his work, whose utter

innocence permitted him and his wife in their little Garden of Eden to receive their visitors without benefit of fig-leaf, for whose marvellous wood-cuts a publisher apologized early in the mystic's career.

Then, taking Blake as a patron saint, I think of Rockwell Kent, for whom editors do not apologize, whose clever combinations of heaven and earth have not been a losing investment. Rockwell Kent was not content to stay in any little Garden of Eden. The Arctic Circle knew him, and Greenland, and Puerto Rico, as well as many other parts of the world. While the angels of Blake circulate in heaven, the flying angels of Rockwell Kent have a much wider circulation.

In religion, one does homage to the patron saint; in the realm of art, one often ignores him, like a poor relation.

EDWARD ADAM KRAMER

My friend Edward Adam Kramer has been extolled as a sensitive artist of delicate originality, of poetic feeling. I knew him when he returned from Europe, in the late nineties, with the cultural equipment of the time, when he painted in the warm coloring of the Munich school. We were neighbors at 232 West 14th Street. I had full occasion to note his development, to watch his figure painting gradually merge into the Adirondack landscape. Year after year that landscape absorbed him, the young Adirondack trees becoming bemused through his tender brush, the wooded interiors speaking to him of solitude, of atmospheric lightness, all transmuted by him into patterns, ambiguous to the casual glance.

No artist ever painted landscape so expressive of deep feeling. And Kramer's were the shyest feelings I have ever known. Those Adirondack trees are painted with such reticence they barely whisper their message. Like Kramer himself, they are almost of

another world. His young birch trees are like silent children of the forest, shrinking in their solitude; and there are other forest interiors from which religious figures emerge almost unseen, so impalpably that one scarcely feels them. To Kramer the storms also speak. They can sweep over his trees, bending them as though the hand of God were pressing them down, with the sky darkly blue in anger. Kramer enjoyed success at the Armory Show, as well as at a subsequent one-man show at the Anderson Gallery. There are collectors who value him, who appreciate his reticence. If popularity has not been his meed, nevertheless he is content to be fulfilling his spiritual duty as an American artist.

LEON KROLL

Leon Kroll has the eye of a hawk and the heart of a dove, which is to say that he has both intelligence and feeling. What he has given to our art is a matter of public record over more years than either he or I would care to say.

An academician and at the same time a humanitarian, Leon Kroll is a consummate craftsman, always sympathetic towards youthful talent, boldly standing up for the rights of others as well as for his own. His art activities have been prodigious, overlapping several generations. As a teacher and lecturer, he has been foremost in the van of the Woodstock tradition. He was an able president of the Painters, Sculptors and Engravers Society, and is an outstanding member of the National Academy. A fluent performer in many branches of art, his convictions have remained unshaken by the extremists; he has consistently carried his classic banner through the turmoil of modernism. Leon Kroll's success is to be respected. Personally, I have always found him a gallant adversary in argument, an artist who has captured many hearts as well as many prizes.

GUS MAGER

Among the names of American artists that pervade our local art histories and our catalogues, some are but too well known. If history is sometimes a lying jade, then the jade of art too may often have a twinkle in her eye over reputations that ultimately go into time's wastebasket.

One thinks of quiet lives spent in unostentatious devotion to an art ideal, without fanfare, with humility and patience that seek no high reward—a spirit that shines forth in the art of Gus Mager.

ALFRED MAURER

Alfred Maurer, whom I knew casually, had a pleasant personality. After his early talent had brought him a prize at the Carnegie Institute, he went to Paris, where he stayed for years. Through mutual friends, I had often heard of him, and when subsequently I came to Paris, we spent some time together.

There was no doubt that he was happy in his Parisian atmosphere. Like many other young Americans there, he was attracted by the life of the boulevards, the cafés, the daily affinity with brother artists with whom he was then studying the problem of color. I found him experimenting with his close friend Eugene Ullman, who had adopted Paris with the same enthusiasm. In his appearance, Alfred Maurer was romantic, gay and debonnaire, the typical artist seemingly beyond all drab necessity.

His father, Louis Maurer, was an old-time artist, who had worked on the Currier & Ives lithographs. When I met him at an exhibition of the Independents at the Grand Central Palace, he was a quiet-mannered man, whom I took to be about seventy-five years old. Later I learned that he was then already ninety-five. He told me how surprised he was at the value and vogue attained by the Currier & Ives lithographs, which in his time had been

merely ordinary subjects for simple homes, like the vast number of engravings of that period. Speaking of his son, Alfred, he evidently could not sympathize with—or, as he said, understand—the ultra-violets and ultra-blues of that phase of Alfred's work. He seemed so proud of what his son had done, but so grieved at what he was then doing.

For some reason, Alfred was subsequently forced to return to New York, leaving behind in Paris his beloved boulevards and the friends of his heart. The idea and the style of his work seemed to change; he turned to the painting of elongated women, after the pattern of Modigliani. Then Louis Maurer, seemingly outraged by his son's work, did an extraordinary thing. He gave an exhibition of his own paintings at the age of one hundred years, a record for all time. Between this unique rejuvenescence of his remarkable father, with the implied reproof against his own art, and the suffering due to ill health, the pit yawned and the unhappy Alfred Maurer left the scene of his sorrows a suicide, his gallant heart broken.

ETHEL MYERS

There is spontaneity and creative joy in the sculpture of Ethel Myers that gives them a unique quality. Her figurines interpret the social comedy that is in the life around us, observed and portrayed with a penetration and originality that has not been without its influence. The vitality of her conceptions won high praise when her work was displayed at the Armory Show and other exhibitions.

JOHN NOBLE

The name of John Noble first became known to me through an early portrait which George Luks painted of him, called "Whiskey Bill." The thin, sensitive face was so unlike the Noble whom I

knew many years later, when he returned from abroad. He came to see me, wearing his inevitable white sombrero and flowing Windsor tie; a powerfully built man with the serious face of a cleric under his hat, reminding me of Franz Liszt. Noble was a fine athlete. With George Luks, he played in the first professional baseball game in Paris. Alone, he rode his white horse into the cafes of Paris, a veritable rough rider, the idol of the French kids. Essentially, however, he was a religious mystic.

The white horse went into his pictures as a poetic symbol. His religious processions of Brittany, as well as his boats off the Breton coast, were enveloped in a religious fog. In me John found something—I know not what—that appealed to him; perhaps it was something in my work that was attuned to his idea of art, making me an exception in his almost wholesale condemnation of his contemporaries.

John's violent encounters at the Salmagundi Club are written large in the memory of that institution—outbursts which were impelled by a fanatic devotion to art. At their dinner, he yanked off the table cloth, carrying all the dishes with it—an indirect though forcible criticism of Salmagundi's art. Towards the end, a tragic brooding came over him. So great was the interior struggle between the John Noble who once fought off five policemen and the artist who painted Provincetown bathed in moonlight, that at last it wore away his resistance. Pathetically, desperately, he grasped at the grand illusion of art that was his life. He truly died for a cause—and that cause was the art of John Noble.

JULES PASCIN

Jules Pascin was first introduced to me by Arthur B. Davies. A slender young man, he was then in America working on his Cuban series, and collectors here were buying his works. He belonged much more to Paris, but during his occasional visits to this coun-

ARTIST IN MANHATTAN

try he became distinctly an influence and an inspiration to a circle of artists.

When we happened to meet, I was touched by his warm-hearted appreciation for my work. It was more than a consolation that a man of Pascin's intense sensitivity should treat me as a real comrade of art.

MAURICE PRENDERGAST

My first meeting with Maurice Prendergast was in a studio in Washington Square, where he and his brother Charles worked together. Any tribute I render to the friendship of the one, must include the other of these artists, in whose joint creative workshop I spent so many pleasant hours.

Of all the men of genius I have known, Maurice Prendergast had the simplest manner. In all modesty he offered his art to the world, and in conversation he showed the same naive charm that is inherent in the lovely magic of his work. A rallying point for us was the Armory Show, where we continued to meet throughout its duration. To him it was a huge circus, cramful of European novelties, of which the "Nude Descending the Stairway" was but an outstanding item.

It was not my good fortune to have known Maurice in his younger days, his Venice days; although even then I knew and loved his work, which was never in such evidence as the work of the more popular painters of the day. He never made any approach to the National Academy; that institution knew him not, this modest artist who fashioned the most joyous patterns of pictures our country possesses. I am happy to have known Maurice Prendergast before it was too late, so that he may remain enshrined in my memory.

JACK SPARROW

Nesting in a studio designed by himself, in an inner court of

Washington Square South, like a rare bird of paradise, Jack Sparrow has carried on his painting for years. Occasionally he has made flights to Arabia, to Mexico, to Spain, to make pictures of gold mines, to do far-off portraits, landscapes of the desert and mountains. But always, like a homing pigeon, he would come flying back to his studio. Canvases laden with research and flower-pieces—one of them often the product of months of painting—would bloom forth in this unique studio in the protected heart of Greenwich Village. Then he would lay his brushes aside, open his Steinway, and have a musicale. Gifted musicians would entertain; there would be guests high in New York life, celebrities of art and science and finance, and the evening would be one to be remembered.

An independent worker, Jack Sparrow is the Lone Eagle of art, a real bachelor of the arts, a smiling philosopher, too analytical to be everybody's friend, but true to the friends he loves. For many years, Jack and I have hobnobbed, sharpening our claws on each other. His studio has the atmosphere both of old New York and of Paris, with its curios, its handsome furnishings, the canvases hanging or tucked away. A fine, gracious host is Jack Sparrow. Like me, he is of the New York that was; and if his time is not as long as mine, yet he has more than a squatter's right to perch in Washington Square.

ABRAHAM WALKOWITZ

The John the Baptist of pre-Armory days, returning from Paris to preach the gospel of modern art, was the remarkable Mr. Walkowitz, who confesses to giving the first exhibition of modern art in New York, at the Haas Gallery on Madison Avenue.

The countless drawings of Isadora Duncan by Walkowitz represented a devotion that never faltered. Exhibition after exhibition, in line and color, attested to his sublime heroine. Walkowitz put

his art at her feet. Of all the artists who depicted that sensational lady of the dance, none penciled her more fervently, to none was she more glamorous than to this gentle, artistic John the Baptist Walkowitz. He has loved all movements in art, crying aloud for them in his native wilderness of New York, lifting up his voice for the unknowns, including Eilshemius. He has shown an enviable capacity for real appreciation of all sincere art forms.

J. ALDEN WEIR

Shortly after Alden Weir had resigned as President of the New Society, I once met him on Fifth Avenue, in front of the Public Library. I asked him why he had left the Society. Laughing, he said that he and Gutzon Borglum had had an argument, and that he, Weir, did not want to be at loggerheads with the Vice-President, who in a rage once smashed the angels he had sculptured for a famous cathedral. Then we had a genial talk, during which I tried to convey my admiration for the fine contribution Alden Weir had made to American art, naming some of his paintings I thought to be of the highest order. He deftly spoke about my work, his handsome face smiling at my embarrassment. Then, in his kindly way, he talked about other artists whom we both knew. Preferring painting to politics, Weir resigned also as President of the National Academy. Ever ready to extend a helping hand or a friendly word of encouragement, he was one of the finest characters in our art annals. Often I still think of this meeting, with the two stone lions of the Library stretched out above us.

HARRY WICKEY

History enshrines those men who stand forth in their time as great leaders, as commanding personalities. In the history of those I have known, Harry Wickey towers high. He is an artist whose far-reaching thought has, to my personal knowledge, created a

following of artists who owe their inspiration and success directly to him. In all his works, his vigorous etchings and lithographs, of city subjects and of mountains, of men and of animals—a volume of production adequate for an ordinary lifetime—there is always an insistence on structural form. This devotion to form has of its own necessity brought forth his sculpture, which is the extension, in a sense the culmination, of his love of life and his power of interpretation.

All the qualities of Wickey's mind are concentrated in his sculpture. The figures that he renders are of real people—people I have actually seen on the streets of New York. His realization of them in terms of art is poignant, without affectation, without concession to current fashions. These figures of Wickey's are not merely large masses to obstruct the eye, to fill space uselessly; they are intensely alive with tragedy, pathos and humor; they breathe a true dignity and are yet within the normal vision.

EPILOGUE

The year 1940 has now come creeping up on the calendar, creeping up on my indifference, creeping up like an ever-growing vine, twining its roots around my memories, memories still finding an outlet in this year of 1939 . . .

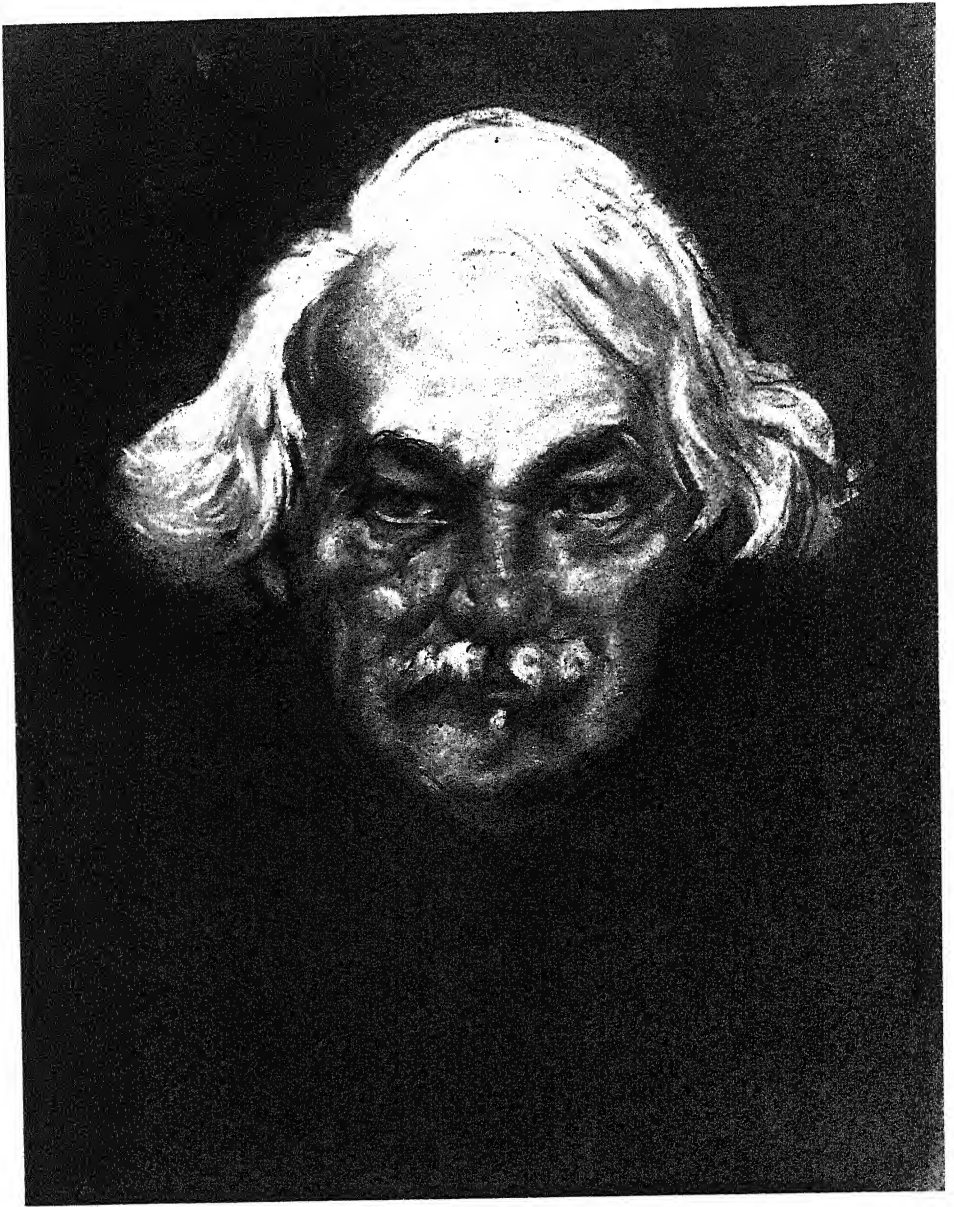
My pen falters over the names of friends in art who no longer have calendared years, nor need such registration; those whose works are embalmed with the dates of their birth and death, little gilt plaques on pictures that survive the hands that painted them. When I go to museums and see only the birth date on a plaque, I think of the arrested hand of fate delaying the final inscription. In the year 1920, these reflections would have been a morbid indulgence. But in 1939 they are as natural as leaves falling from the dying tree, whose trunk with its bare branches becomes a lonely target for the sighing wind, or a lovely pattern for the moonbeams to shine through . . .

This image of the moonlight pleases me. It suggests peace, the quiet reverie . . . To pass away in moonlight, on a quiet journey, rather than in the glare of the sun; gently to drift in the luminous shadows that glide over my easy chair . . . Now the mood of moonlight hovers over my pictures, which hang like separate recollections, the echoes of past feelings. Yet I have but to touch my telephone and young voices will welcome me and make my days bright again . . .

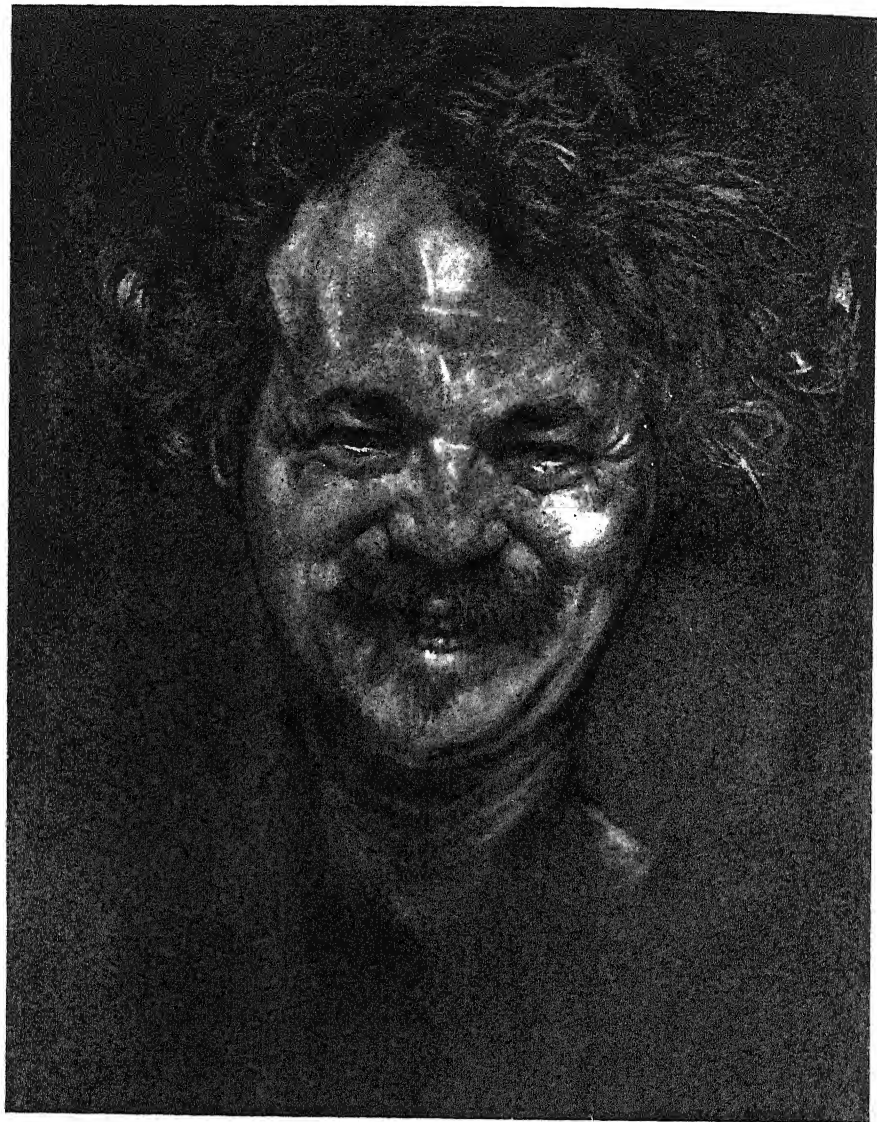
MANHATTAN, PORTRAYED THROUGH THE YEARS

“I too walk’d the streets of Manhattan Island, and
bathed in the waters around it,
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,
In the day among crowds of people sometimes they
came upon me,
In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed
they came upon me . . .”

WALT WHITMAN



JEROME MYERS



SELF PORTRAIT

Collection of The Whitney Museum of American Art

SELF PORTRAITS

In the mirror the artist comes face to face with himself in the many moods that life impresses on him. It may be in self-revelation, or a gay defiance to laugh with life or at it, to seize the fleeting moment of joy, to capture the symbol of happiness. Or perhaps to let the brush portray the care and thoughtfulness that the observant eye sees in the mirror's record of the changes Time has wrought . . .

Mirrored in reverse, the image of what we were, of what we are or in the alchemy of thought, of what we may think we are. Throughout the ages, artists have left personal records of themselves and their epochs; Peter Paul Rubens in all his bravery of gay plumage and costume, with his background of opulent wives; the grave Rembrandt in the self-communions he depicted so often, that reflect his many-sided personality; the harassed face of Van Gogh looks at us from his canvas, a living testimony of his suffering.

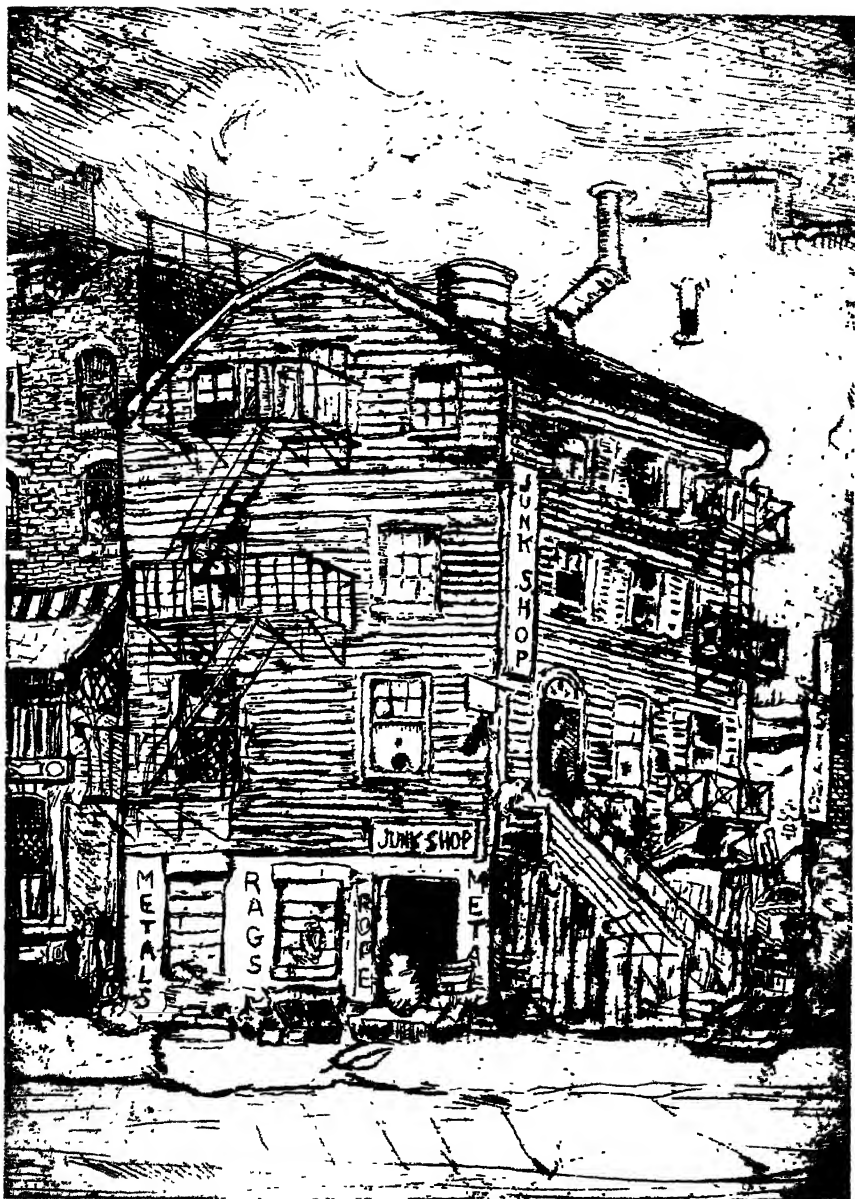
Artists have painted themselves even as I have done, at times bravely meeting the encounter, at other moments shrinking from contact with the soul that in my sadness seems to peer at me from the mirror, the weight of years dimming the mood until friendly time may smile again for my next adventure with the revealing glass.

JUNK SHOPS

Junk shops, weather-beaten storehouses of motley contents, barometers of local poverty. In the windows, discarded fineries that tempt the curiosity, odds and ends ingloriously heaped, minor heirlooms of vanished families, stray fragments from evictions, old books in promiscuous piles, trunks whose days of service are over, trinkets dusty and corroded, degraded picture frames, battered chromos, broken china, copper kettles of dubious shapes. Places where one browses and searches, alert for the romance of discovery—perhaps to find among this buried rubbish a thing desired—the joy of the hunt, the passion of *père Goriot* in Balzac's "Cousin Pons" to find a masterpiece—so easy in fiction, so rare on Eleventh Avenue.

A junk shop on Essex Street. Here are old automobiles, old pipes and plumbing thrown aside from rookeries torn down, wooden doors that violated the new fire laws, pathetic baby carriages with crippled wheels and bodies, fit only for small boys to carry their junk in, a soap-box to replace the wicker body in which an infant pride once waved its rattle. Then the waterfront junk shop, marine in character; ropes its staple, things for ships that sail, lanterns, winches, sail cloths, nautical instruments . . .

The protean junk shop in our city of skyscrapers. Not yet snuffed out, a picturesque anachronism, surviving the Wooden Indian and the regimentation of Big Business. The junk shop has been a pet of my pencil, a vestige of that New York of mine which has all but vanished.



JUNK SHOP

Etching



THE GIRLS

Painting

Collection of Arthur F. Egner

THE GIRLS

A little fugue in grays, tender grays out of which softly emerge my dream children, hand in hand, wrapped in their atmospheric environment, little spirits of the East Side, dauntlessly facing the vast sky that creeps like a pale ghost over the line of the river—all gently fading in the evening haze.

The children look on in silence as the day folds up in the Manhattan fog. These children of mist whom I have evoked from my memory of a soft evening near the river, these children in their sweet pride, are a dear memory. I have here preserved their youth as I would mine were preserved, that I might fancy myself still a child looking at a world of fairy mist, the future just as vague as to them, just a wonder dream—that I might keep the candid simplicity of these children as they face their world.

THE GRANDMOTHER

From subdued golden tones to vivid scarlet, all the beauties of color that bring to us the matured symphonies of our fall landscape, the rich sonorous russets that take over the fading greens of summer . . . so the Grandmother, mellowed in her dignity of age, takes in her protective arms the infant who infuses a spirit of spring, green and verdant. Those arms that held the mother so many summers ago now hold this child in all the contentment of mother love, again to strike the same chord, that mysterious chord that sounds across the generations.



THE GRANDMOTHER

Painting

Collection of The Art Institute of Chicago



Drawing

MOTHER AND CHILD

“Mother and Child,” the caption of a million pictures. But this is my personal record of the age-old motif—my own wife and child, sketched in the early morning in my West 23rd Street studio. To me it is a touching souvenir of a period that involved a domestic history replete with crowded details—details of which I kept no record and of which even my memory is shy. To this period I feel that I could not do justice in the retelling; it is much too personal in its implications, its limits too unbounded. Better to let it slumber in my heart as, in this picture, my dear ones are slumbering in the early dawn.



THE ARTIST'S WIFE

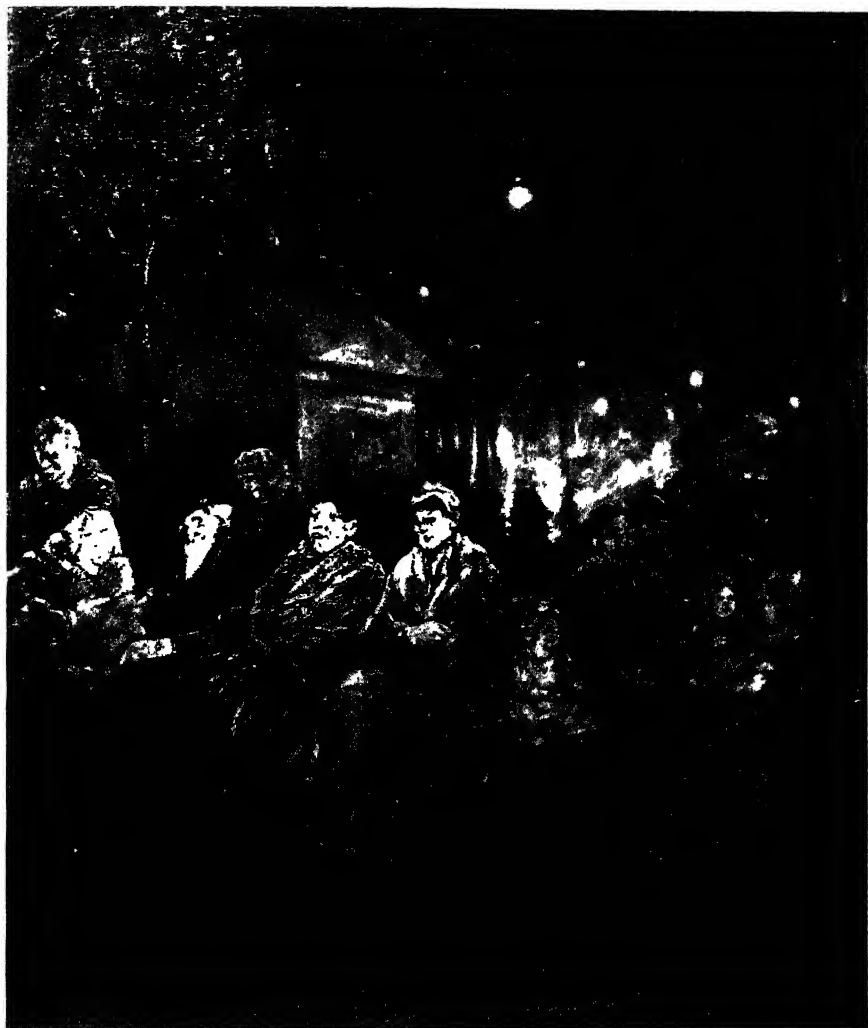
Painting



SAINT DAY IN LITTLE ITALY

Drawing

Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art



SEWARD PARK

Painting

Collection of the Phillips Memorial Gallery



THE LEMON VENDOR
Drawing



PURSUIT OF PLEASURE

Painting

Collection of Arthur F. Egner



THE END OF THE WALK

Painting

Collection of Julia Peck

THE END OF THE WALK

At the Armory Exhibition, I was represented by this picture. Among all that influx of European art emotion, the picture signifies my reaction to sorrow, the sorrow of resignation. On a bench at the river edge, the unrelieved sky is but a curtain for the few figures one sees dimly, as though they were outward bound. The light motif is furnished by the blond face of the sleeping Jew, lit from a distant lantern.

These types are not to be judged too hastily. There is repose in this solitude, a solitude on the edge of great Manhattan. Watching this muted drama of the night, I thought of these lives as I had observed them in their daily rounds. I knew these women were not outcasts; they were far too vital. With a vast experience in the adventure of life, they were utterly disdainful of appearances. Each day they matched their wits against destiny. When they went begging, it was satirically, with a callous humor on their lips. Yet they were tolerant of the careful housewives among whom the worries of family life took their toll by day, to whom the night brought a loving family fireside.

The blond Jew sleeps on in his adopted land of the free, no Cossacks to terrify him, no sudden expulsion, here to enjoy peace in the summer night, repose in the kindly Manhattan night.

SUNDAY MORNING

The Puritan Sabbath is far in the past. It is Sunday morning in the Italian quarter of the city; the early groups are out on their Sunday parade. As yet, these brawny sons of Italy had not built the first subway, as they were later to proclaim proudly at Columbus Circle, where, celebrating its finish, they were to regard it as a contribution that enabled our city to gather up its suburbs, making Greater New York a reality. Here are life-loving men strolling along with their wives and children, all unhampered by traffic rules; there are no traffic signs, no safety zones, no automobile peril. It was a time when a young Italian born here would marry the daughter of an Irish janitor, their mothers-in-law not even understanding each other's language. But good-will speaks louder than words. Where there is love, there is understanding, the understanding that in ever-widening circles comprehends all races and languages; a force that has come out of our public schools and our daily life, to merge Americans into one.



SUNDAY MORNING

Painting



TRAVELING DENTIST

Etching

TRAVELING DENTIST

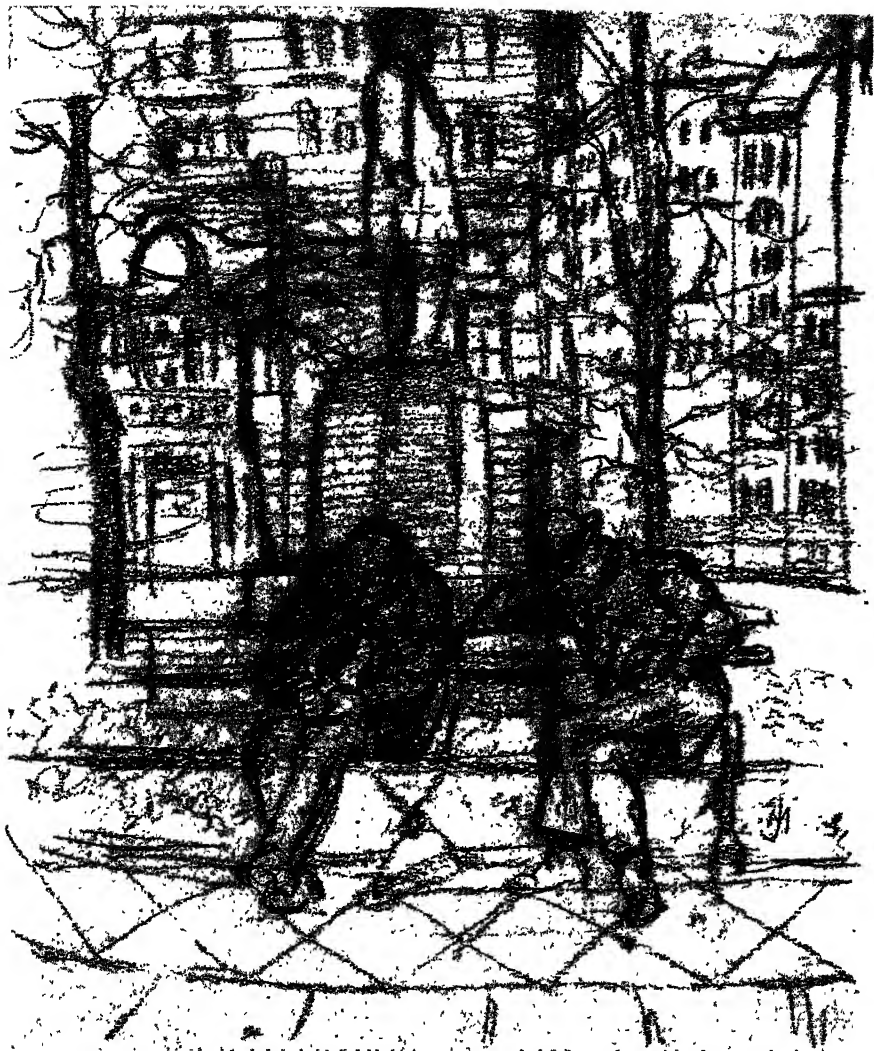
The King of the Painless Dentists in his open barouche, with a rigid coachman holding in the royal team. The emperor with forceps in hand, full of Yiddish witticisms and pseudo-scientific jargon, imbues the boy's mind with a sense of self-importance that puts him on too high a plane to utter an ordinary howl. A cynosure of all eyes, the lad clenches his fists inside his pockets and opens his mouth, a little stoic defying the pliers like Ajax defying the lightning.

The assembled crowd looks on, their minds teeming with dental reminiscences, experiencing all the skepticism and the faith that attend minor miracles. Always they are receptive to the doctrine that pain does not exist, whether suavely put forth in the stately churches of Christian Science, or as then, long ago on the East Side, being rolled along on four wheels, expounded by a glib gentleman in Yiddish, imposing in his flowing whiskers and broad-brimmed hat, his hands and tongue equally skillful.

Like the snows of yesteryear, he and his like are now no more; only the open barouche may still ramble through Central Park, to give a curious couple the thrill of a jog in the Gay Nineties, while the automobiles whiz past.

ON A MADISON SQUARE BENCH

Two men on a bench in Madison Square, their past troubles, their present worriments buried in slumber . . . in whatever dreams of the future may lift the shadow of their eclipse to new opportunities—golden opportunities that in our American life are so often realized in the lives of those temporarily down and out . . . the hope that fickle fortune may bequeath new careers to these sleeping men, vagrants to the police, bums to be rudely awakened, but to an artist, subjects for a sympathetic vision.



ON A MADISON SQUARE BENCH

Drawing

Collection of Arthur F. Egner



ICE LINE

Drawing



CAROUSEL

Painting

Collection of James Marshall



BRONX ZOO

Drawing

THE BRONX ZOO

The Bronx Zoo is well-known for its many creatures: pythons that can crush an ox as easily as a circus strong man lifts his dumbbells; the Bengal tiger with his uncertain stare; the self-contained lion; the hippopotamus, ready to swallow a few Jonahs; polar bears, slouching far from their arctic regions where no iron bars intercept; elephants, wisely conforming to their surroundings, taking peanuts from their little human friends, as though their wise brains knew it made these children happy; monkeys, an unconscious humor in their travesty of emotions, at times so strangely familiar, their sad eyes seeming as though we had stolen their birthright—like a dog's eyes so often, although with more right of fellowship; and on their perches all manner of feathered creatures, a vast category, plucked from every nook of the earth for the visitor's enjoyment.

Young artists go daily to study the animals, to note the anatomical structure in their movements, safer by far than the hunters who go after big game; while I linger over this little scene of two children, hand in hand, looking at these parrots. The children have seen the fortune teller with his little organ, have watched the beak of the captive bird pick out a card of destiny. Here the parrots are off duty, but always to the children they are wise birds who know the future.

STREET GROUP

Three old houses, timeworn veterans of the East Side; their youth, their freshness, their whole character so changed with successive usage as to leave no hint of the period when they were charming family houses, with old-fashioned kitchen ranges and front parlor rooms opened only on special occasions. The flagstone sidewalks cut off the little gardens, changed conditions mutilated the fronts for shops, the basements were parceled up between the tailor and the iceman, and To Let signs became commonplace pendants. In the windows, incongruous electric lights lit up wedding costumes, for hire to successive generations like the old houses themselves.

These old chums of houses were on the corner of Clinton and Delancey Streets. In the widening of Delancey Street, one of them was torn down by municipal decree. Perhaps now, the rest are gone too—good, faithful servants who housed their needy tenants. I remember their dormer windows barely able to hold their decrepit sides together, the once shingled roof covered with tin, oxidized to a beautiful russet. The gleam of that russet tin roof is like a remembered sunset, that has passed forever.

At the First Municipal Art Exhibition of New York in 1934, where about one thousand works of art were shown it happened that I experienced the unexpected thrill of having my "Street Group" purchased by the Metropolitan Museum, the second of my oils to be thus honored.



STREET GROUP

Painting

Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art



THE WINDY CORNER

Painting

Collection of Arthur F. Egner

THE WINDY CORNER

A wintry day east of the Bowery—not far from the famous Five Points Mission House. Rooted in the generations it has already survived, this corner house now stands in still another winter, the snow drifting from the eaves and dormer ledges, the pedestrians with flattened umbrellas edging against the wind.

The school children happily battle one another with snow in this friendly storm—a charming note in this wintry scene. Many summers had I sketched here, this corner house I had seen decorated for an Italian fiesta like an old woman for a party. To paint it now in winter was a rare souvenir. Summer with its outflowing life was the key motive of my subject. Napoleon retreating from Moscow would have left me cold; but if I had caught him in the Luxembourg Gardens playing with children, I might at least have sketched the children.

With this subject I enjoyed the grey symphony of the dull winter tones, the gay color spots of the children, the zest of the snow flurries. And to this old house on the corner—a toast to it and to the new order to come, and to those children now grown up, that their children may also enjoy in some New York of tomorrow the merry gambol of the snowball.

THE MARKET

In one of her novels, George Eliot remarks, "Seeing the back of a young girl always creates a curiosity to see her face." Seeing the backs of these old women, one does not need to see their faces to realize the nature of their histories. By these backs, we can gauge all the cares of life that have been their portion, the storms that have passed over their sturdy frames; even the backgrounds of their mother countries, the generations they have nurtured, still retaining the vitality to labor, to put by savings for the family's fund. Matriarchs of the East Side, their lives adjusted to their condition, vigorous types of our cosmopolitan New York.



THE MARKET

Painting

Collection of Dr. A. R. L. Dohme



Sketch for the Painting



Collection of Arthur F. Egner

AUGUST SIESTA

Tenement rooms can be measured almost in inches, the inches becoming still smaller as the family grows. But outdoors, on the pavements of the open street, there need be no measuring rod, any more than for the flowering meadows. So calmly logical, this family garnered the open spaces to their own street front. A few pillows, a blanket or so, and the evening breeze fans their cheeks as it might in far-away fields. Without a magic carpet to transport them, right outside their own doors they sleep peacefully.



EVENING

Painting

Collection of Amherst College



A STREET CORNER

Painting



THE BARKER

Drawing



MULBERRY STREET

Drawing



REPOSE
Painting



THE WOODEN INDIAN

Painting

Collection of Julia Peck

THE WOODEN INDIAN

The wooden Indian and the ice-cream man, the cigar store and the delicatessen store . . . a child sits on the curb with his little cone . . . the vendor ladles out still another . . . a stout mother awaits her turn . . . a child without a penny watches, watches and waits for a turn of luck . . . the parrot in the cage squawks a hello . . . the woman passes on her way home . . . as she passes these East Side stores, the parrot again squawks, now a goodbye.

THE STREET MARKET

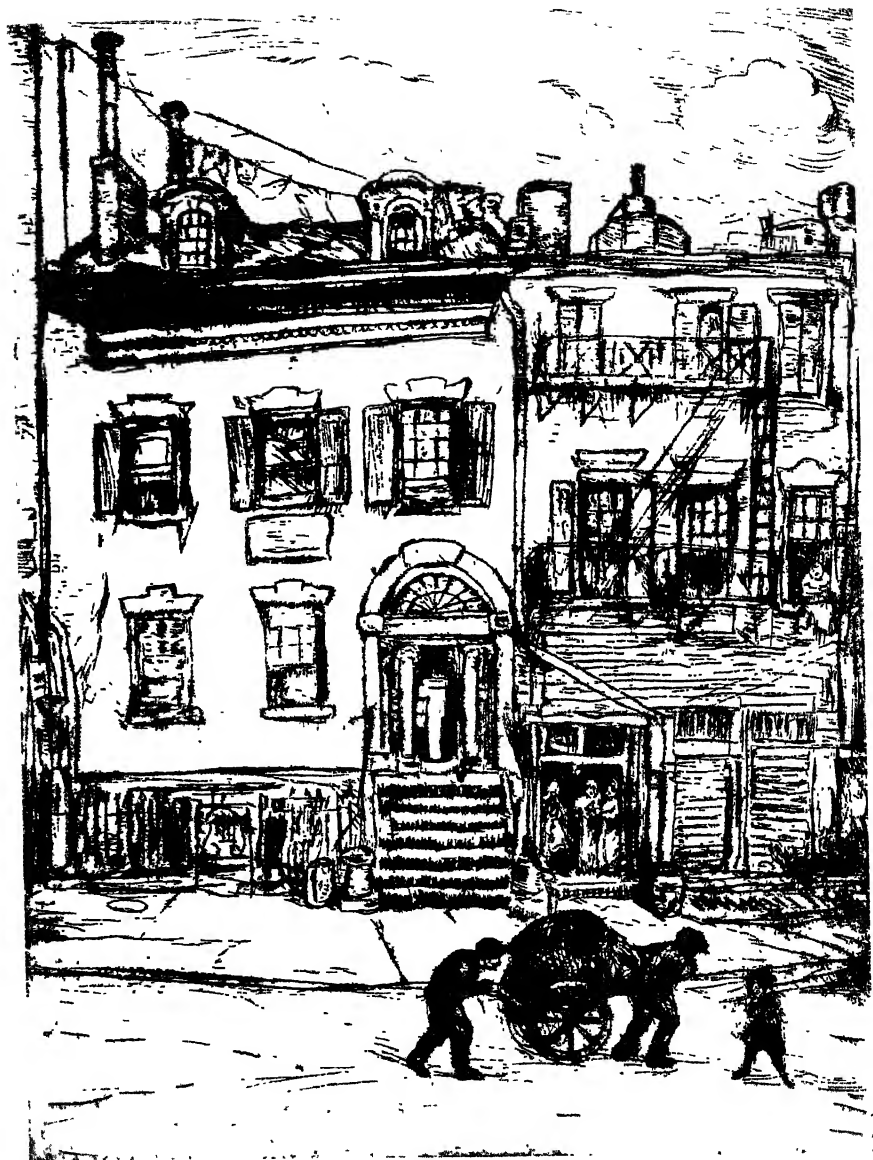
In artists' vernacular, a low-toned canvas with a predominant orange color merging into russet brown, relieved by greens. From a human viewpoint, the figures have the arresting quality of tragic overtone, a simplicity of action; another little saga of the street market, devoid of anecdotal interest, of the artificial grouping that makes for the studio composition, for a picture of obvious comment, a caricature or satire. Just a fragment of life, it is inclusive enough to render all the human histories under the picturesque garments, under the casual bartering; the grandmothers of their race fulfilling their quota of work for the life of their families, a life that is even now on the way to the great change.



THE STREET MARKET

Painting

Collection of Samuel Golden



ON OAK STREET

Etching

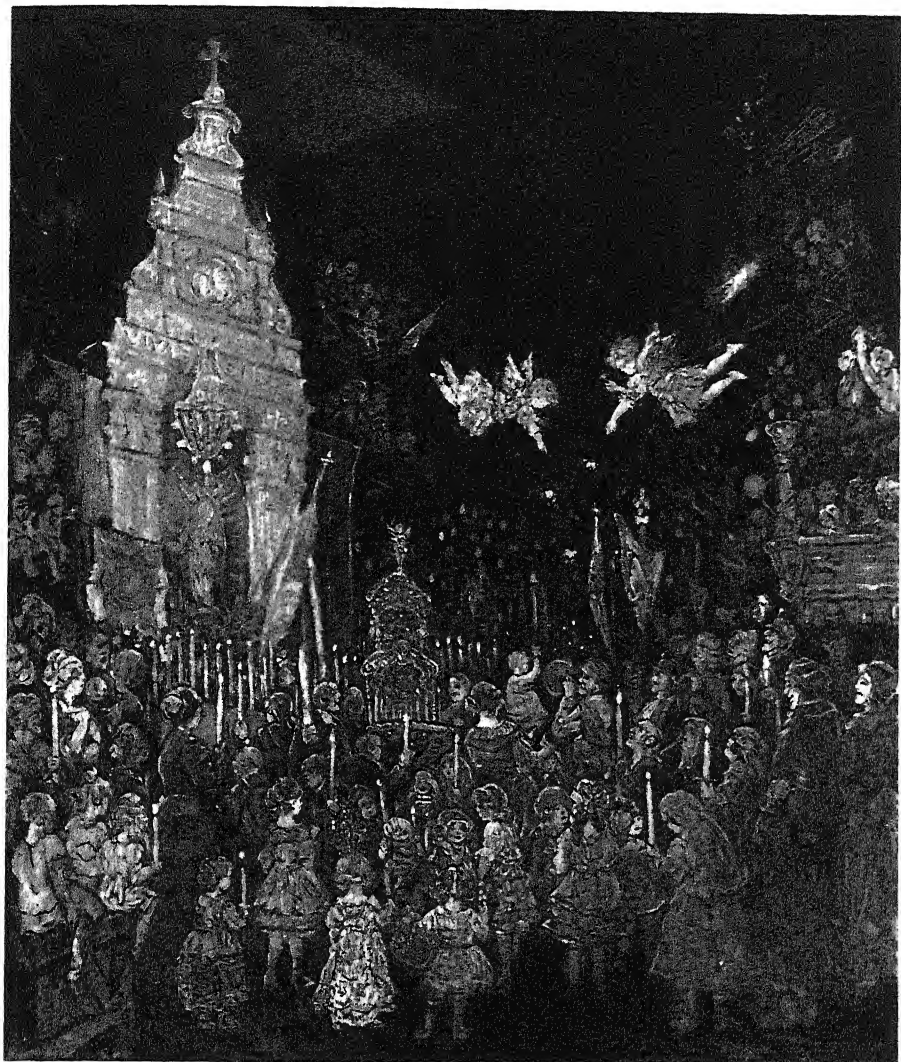
ON OAK STREET

Like Greece, this house had on its own scale its grandeur and its decline. However, unlike Greece, its loss of beauty and position was more than compensated for by its usefulness in decay. Where formerly one family held sway with its attached history, many families now reared their sons and daughters—before remodeling and city housing inaugurated a new era.

THE ANGELS OF THE FIESTA

The great religious vision, the transfiguration of the East Side, came about in this way. Caught in an immense swirl of people at a religious fiesta in Elizabeth Street, I remember standing with my back against a stable door. The street was ablaze with festoons of colored lights, the street shine gloriously outlined against the night sky. In the background, people huddled on the tenement fire-escapes; the windows were crowded with faces alive with dramatic fervor. Triumphant chords sounded from the glittering street band playing right above the stable door, where I stood helpless. Noticing that the people began to look upwards, I raised my eyes.

I saw two angels suspended on ropes worked by half-naked figures on opposite sides of the street. Seeming to fly through the air above, they were throwing flowers down on the uplifted faces, at the same time reciting Italian religious poetry; and during this Assumption of the Madonna there were child angels in the street below as in the air overhead. The spirit of the Lord had descended to the crowd and the crowd was the spirit of the Lord, made human and manifest. Yes, in this surging crowd were politicians smoking black cigars, subway laborers whose bare breasts gleamed with sweat, mothers whose antique faces stood carved in the electric light, like models of the great painters; and children with lighted candles, beautiful children robed in white, happy children with ruffled dresses gay with the colors of the rainbow, their voices in song, a little John the Baptist in a shepherd skin, young lovers hand in hand eating their holiday cakes. With music and fireworks the angels above threw down their little gifts, and the angels below marched solemnly past my stable door.



ANGELS OF THE FIESTA

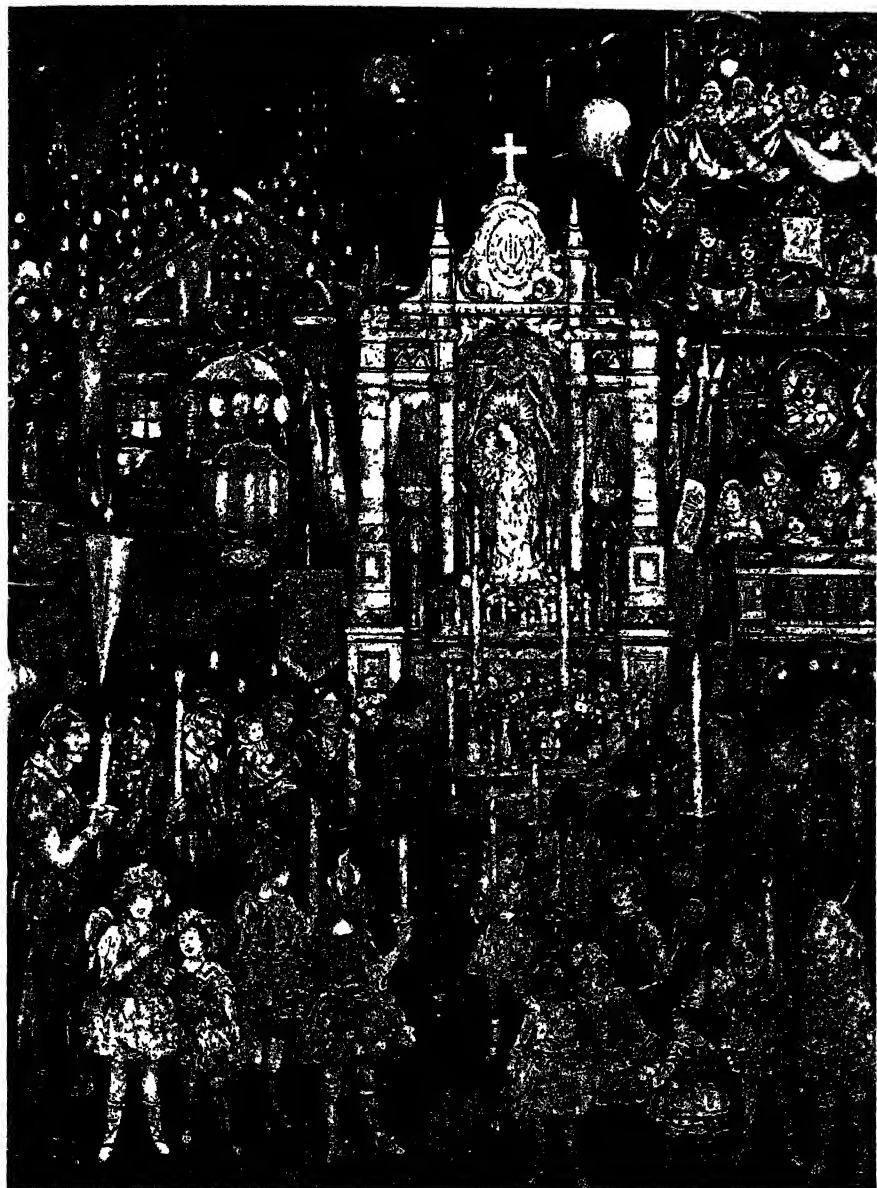
Painting

Collection of The Rochester Museum



RELIGIOUS FESTIVAL

Painting



THE STREET SHRINE

Painting

Collection of The Brooklyn Museum



OLD HOUSE

Lithograph

OLD HOUSE

Why should one be told the factual history of this house, of its past respectability, its erstwhile dignity as a fine city residence? To me all this could not compare with the human interest. The wear and tear are plainly showing on the worn stone steps, on the window sills ragged with age, on the windows that are no longer spic and span but yet survive bravely and usefully. The tireless Italian iceman has made his room-to-room delivery; the fathers are at work and the mothers are preparing for the evening meal. On the steps, children are playing school, changing places with one another as teachers, a miniature democracy of make-believe education; while one of the children, too young among its seniors, sprawls on a curbstone.

The corner lamp post, lighted by gas, was just being converted to electricity. The automobile was still around the corner; the streets were for the people's use, except for the cobblestones over which the milkwagon still rattles and the dray peddles its pots of geraniums for the window sills. But one after another, these changes were to roll on past this time-worn colonial doorway—and each time the children at their play were to change teachers.

EAST SIDE CORNER

A cross-section of the East Side in its communal barter, in an interlude following the early morning's intense activity. There is time to gossip between sales, to exchange daily histories, to keep warm the human contact. Hardships and privations, while sharpening their wits, have yet not dulled the humor of these people, in a fervid life in which a bachelor is an oddity, almost an abstraction; in which the concern of one is the concern of all—the logical result of common persecutions now past, forgotten in the symphonic freedom of New York's East Side.



EAST SIDE CORNER

Painting

Collection of The Newark Museum



MADISON SQUARE GARDEN BALCONY

Drawing

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN BALCONY

To go from the tented show of my boyhood to the vast iron-girded circus of Madison Square Garden, is to pass from the open spaces into the congestion of steel and stone that is called New York. Even here, playful humanity finds a way to retain the gathered tradition, to renew its pleasure, sharing the children's joy in the annual advent of the Big Show.

Through the city streets during the night before the opening, stalk the ghostly grey elephants in lines that startle the beholder; then the gayly decorated wagons that cage the wild animals—a silent parade on their way to the Garden. The circus posters are flaming on billboards; the children are all a-quiver; young America takes its parents' hands and, by subway and bus and on foot flocks to the time-honored feast of romance.

The three-ring circus of amazing marvels: the diversified clowns, the gorgeous parades, the marvelous gymnasts, the candy and peanuts, the strange animals, the still stranger freaks . . . The child gazes, he claps his hands, he is overwhelmed. And when he goes home to bed, he still sees the beautiful ladies leaping on and off spotted horses flying around the circle. . . . Now the horses run slower and slower . . . now they are stopping . . . and the child is sleeping, a happy smile on his tired face.

TWO OLD MEN

On a bench in Seward Park, these two old men were so earnestly engrossed in conversation that they had no eyes for me as I stood sketching them from nearby. Whether they were arguing some subtle point of the Talmud or another subject, I know I had time to get two drawings before I was observed, my sketch book already under my arm. In these sketches, an aftermath of that casual meeting, these old men still live for me with their attitudes so intimate. A park policeman, who had been standing near me while I drew, said to me afterwards, "You got them all right, and you're lucky at that. Those old guys wouldn't have posed for love or money." And I was happy that my pencil served me so well.



TWO OLD MEN

Drawing

Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art



ON THE DECK

Drawing

CROSSING THE CHANNEL

En route from London to Paris in June, 1914, this channel boat had a motley crowd of passengers who piqued my curiosity. My later remembrance is accented especially by an impression of British officers in undress, on their way to France for duty months before the great war—an impending event which did not then cast its shadow over us as it did over the governments abroad. No cloud hung over our projected pleasure trip; we still saw the gates to Paris open for us, never dreaming that they were so soon to be closed under the mailed fist of Mars.



CROSSING THE CHANNEL

Drawing



AT SAVOY HOTEL, LONDON
Drawing



IN A PARIS BUS
Drawing



PARIS MARKET
Drawing



BOULEVARD MARKET, PARIS

Painting



Sketch for the Painting



THE MARKET WOMEN, PARIS

Drawing



OLD CHATEAU

Drawing

THE OLD CHATEAU

In the fair days before the World War, my friend Eugene Ullman invited us to spend a week-end in this old chateau in Nogent La Roi, a quaint town some thirty-five miles from Paris. The chateau that Eugene had rented was a genuine antique. The massive walls were ivy-mantled. The huge fireplace in the bed chamber must have kept the yeomanry of long ago busy bringing logs to feed its capacious maw. The casement window looked out on a narrow village street that had in time grown up to the chateau itself. But the brass cot that my little daughter slept in was of our time, as was the other bed also. I was told the history of this ancient edifice, but I have forgotten it. So, for me, all its history is now condensed into the fact that my wife and daughter slept there and that I sketched them that early french morning before we went back to Paris to be finally dislodged by the war.

REFUGEES SLEEPING

Huddled figures sleeping through another day of their seven-day voyage homeward, away from war-torn Europe. Their inconvenience was slight and temporary compared to that of those who were to sleep in the trenches. For those others, the dreams of horror became only too true; whereas these people, caught off-guard at the sudden onset of a world war, could awake each morning, happy to be one day nearer the Statue of Liberty. During this voyage, ordinary social distinctions were swept aside; a common peril made these people companionable in accepting conditions on that ship, the *St. Louis*, which was swiftly bearing them home from where they did not belong and were not wanted, back to families waiting with all the love of anxious hearts.



ONE DAY NEARER THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

Drawing



AT THE LOUVRE

Drawing

AT THE LOUVRE

Copying the old masters in museums is an occupation with many meanings. For most, it is not to sit at their feet and worship but rather to try on the clothes of the masters—the more perfect the copy, the more perfect the impersonation. When Rubens went to Spain to copy his contemporaries, reproductions did not exist; it was the tribute of one master to his fellow-masters, the grand flourish of an ambassador of good will. In our own age, all museums have copyists, some devoting their entire lives to reproduce, often with astonishing skill, these glories of the past; to probe into the techniques of those dead and gone, hiring out their skill to those who out of vanity prefer these flowers from the past of art, ignoring the living art that blooms under their very eyes. The past masters made their individual contributions, from which the copyists have neither the courage nor the desire to take a true hint. When I saw these two copyists at the Louvre, their attitudes symbolized the idealistic beginning and the pessimistic end of museum copying as a profession: enthusiastic ardor of the youth, to whom the Rembrandt will be another step on his path to glory; and slumping on his stool, the shopworn veteran, to whom the old masters, one and all, are merely his bread and butter.

PARIS IN 1914

Looking at my Paris drawings evokes memories of the many pleasant hours I spent getting my impressions of the city just before the World War. Peace was still in the air and there was no hint of the vast catastrophe that was soon to break out over Europe and finish my sketching because the most innocent sketch was a criminal offense against military authority.

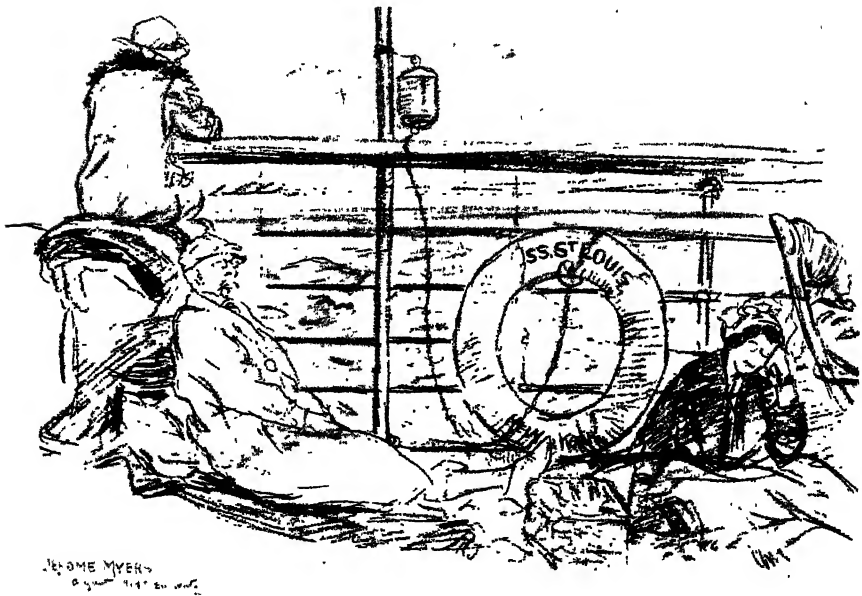
I remember the mighty Cathedral of Notre Dame, reminiscent to me of Victor Hugo's romance of the terrible Hunchback and the delicate, foolish Esmeralda with her pet goat; a story difficult to reconstruct in the imagination while looking at this towering monument, so prosaic in the full light of day. More interesting to me was a small street, whose name eludes my memory, with a stone wall built in the twelfth century. Passing on, I found myself at Les Halles, the Paris market, where—like a homing pigeon—I was again with my market people. It was a French version of the East Side, in a more romantic setup, with the people just as picturesque, although more homogeneous.

The early mornings found me at work at the Paris market, under an arch which, I believe, was part of the original wall of Paris. Quaint casements with fastidious flowers, and a mother feeding a child not so fastidious. Underneath, the inevitable flower shop, its massed roses perfuming the air. Beyond, through the arch, one could see picturesque marketers in a streaming procession, a colorful parade of those who help feed the nation. Here in America we have no such picturesque porters, in corduroys and gay sashes, with ladder baskets strapped to their shoulders and projecting far over their heads. My East Side in New York is grayer in tone, richer in types of various races. Though it has a more sombre tone, it becomes more significant through association and is naturally more appealing to my brush.

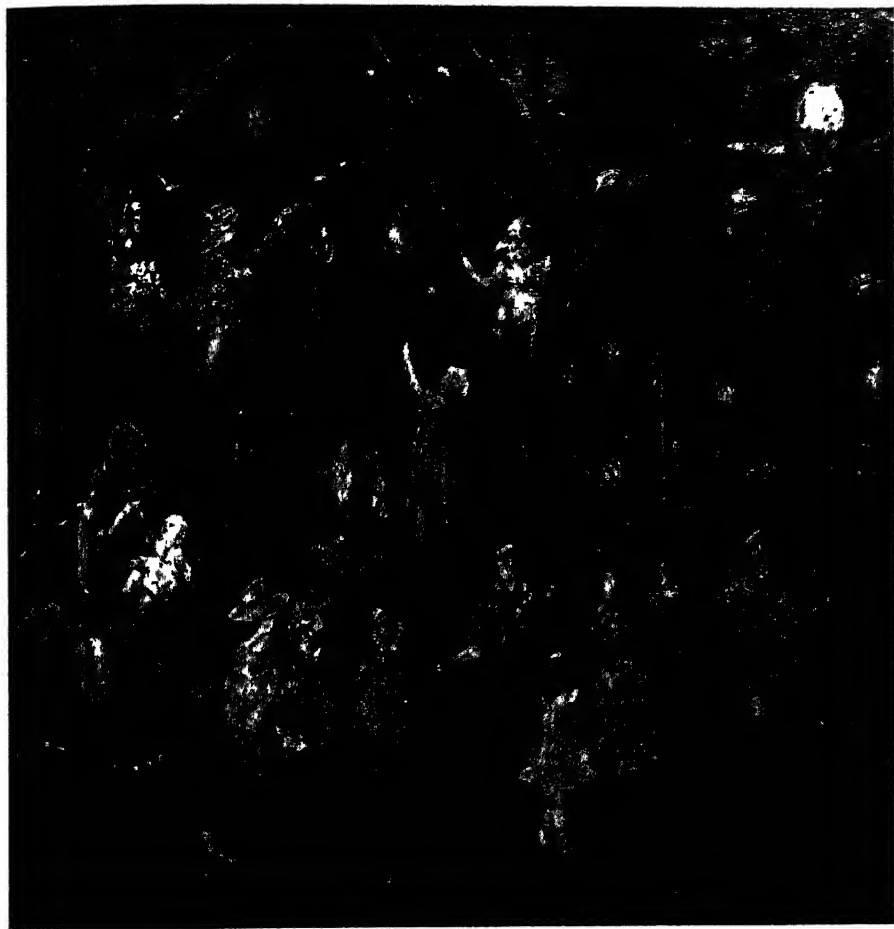


MARKET ARCH, PARIS

Painting



MARKING TIME ON THE S. S. ST. LOUIS
 Drawings



WONDERLAND

Painting

Collection of The Phillips Memorial Gallery



FRENCH MUSIC HALL

Painting

Collection of Arthur F. Egener

THE FRENCH MUSIC HALL

Thousands of miles from the Bowery, guided by my pencil seeking the human element, here in this small theatre of Paris I found a life akin to my sympathies. Here were people as I knew them back in New York, their language similarly a mere camouflage for emotional reactions that were practically the same as those of the audiences that filled the old Minor's Theatre on the Bowery in Manhattan. Mephistopheles and the singing girl—what they sang in French I could only guess at, though I sensed she was too gay for Papa Devil. He seemed to be warning her like a kindly devil, and a solemn audience seemed to agree with his reproof. But a kindly audience applauded his futile efforts and gave the girl a round of applause when she finally convinced them she had been only fooling, leaving them all in the mood for another drink.

THE BLACKSMITH SHOP

Poets like Longfellow found the blacksmith a symbol of manly brawn, a vital figure in the industry of a horse-drawn age. Today New Yorkers barely remember the magnificent Percheron that used to be the pride of our breweries. The drivers of the heavy trucks would decorate their teams, grooming them with loving care, as though they might be stars in the movies of a later day. The team was beautifully matched, the horses proud in their own right. Theirs was a glorious day, the day of the indispensable blacksmith.

But soon the blacksmith shops grew fewer and fewer, the one here portrayed surviving on 40th Street, near Third Avenue, until only a few years ago, a stone's throw from the Grand Central Terminal, with all its new magnificence. The locomotive could change its type, could magnify its power; but the blacksmith had only his craft, and as the horses disappeared, he could but watch his trade gradually dwindle away. Smaller and smaller became his one-story shop; he had to share his quarters with carpenters and other craftsmen, until finally the streets of New York needed him no more. Now, if he survives at all, he may be working in huge repair shops for corporations that still find horses serviceable. The horse that draws the milk wagon is still to be seen on our streets, but the men who do the shoeing would form no picture for a Longfellow, whether in words or paint. No longer is there a chestnut tree for a background, and the swinging sign of the horse-shoe has joined the water-trough as extinct relics of our city streets.



AN OLD BLACKSMITH SHOP

Etching



UNDER THE BRIDGE

Painting

UNDER THE BRIDGE

Under the stone span of the bridge, approaching the East River, is the street market. Here the neighboring housewife comes for her family needs. Brawny arms display fresh fish, meat and vegetables for her inspection. The by-play of humor is always an aspect of this age-old comedy of the market. The prototype of this scene in our own Manhattan was no doubt enacted back in ancient Ur, while Chaldean shepherds watched the first stars under some oriental arch. It was in another language, but the matching of wits in those ancient times must have run on just as merrily. Then, as now, a bearded Hercules had his contest of wit; against a different background but of the same humanity.

FIRST AVENUE

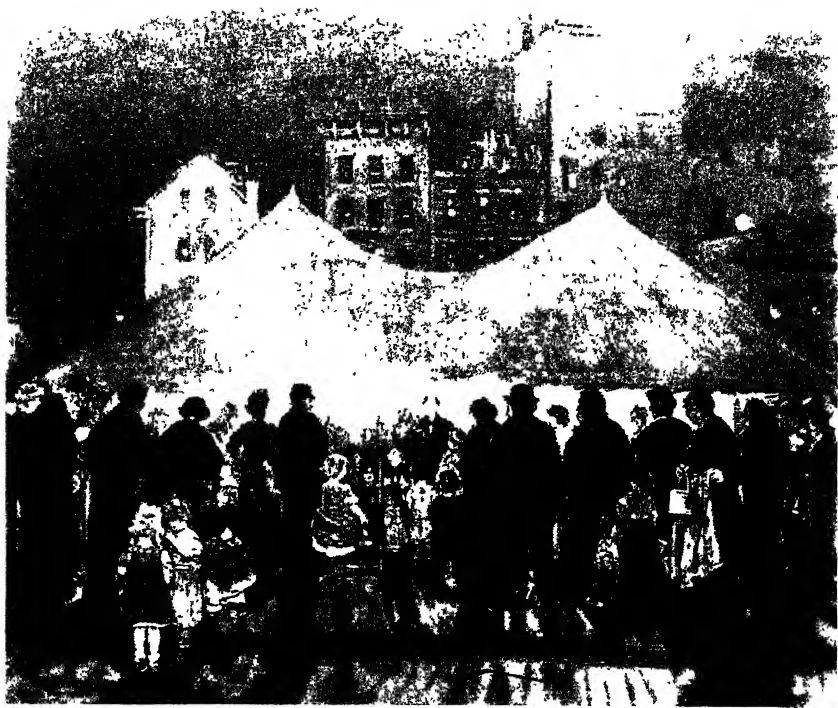
The first skyscraper invaded First Avenue near Fiftieth Street, throwing its shadow over the puny three-and four-story houses that in their youth had thrown their own modest shadows on the still smaller houses they replaced—with only the tower of a brewery to stand like a bully over them. Scornfully the skyscraper looks down on brewery and houses alike; at the time of this sketch, it heaved the line of the street up into space like a huge finger pointing the way.

As I now write, this skyscraper is no longer dominant. Line after line, street after street, tall apartment buildings have entirely changed the skyline of First Avenue. All along the East River, telephones now ring in twentieth stories, suites have supplanted the furnished rooms. No longer are inquiries to the To-Let sign answered by a stout woman with a baby in her arms; applications must be made to a superintendent in a fine office. The Italian fruit stand, the mother with her children, those who buy, those who pass, have been whisked away. Even the baby carriages are now sumptuous affairs with well-dressed nurses. Mothers parade their Pomeranians, the stationery store no longer sells lollypops. First Avenue has been refined, following a new design for living.



FIRST AVENUE

Drawing



MISSION TENT

Painting

My studies for these pictures were of great psychological interest to me. The tent was pitched on a slip near the East River, to house an Episcopal mission in a Catholic neighborhood. As an observer, I sensed a curious hostility, not so much religious as social, of which I recall an instance: one of the mission's head men, in immaculate frock coat, carefully groomed, a diamond stick pin in his tie, the fingers holding his hymn book slender and aristocratic; and in front of me, a middle-aged woman with a child in her arms, looking the man over from head to foot with a resentful expression I can plainly recall.

Leaning over the small organ, which a young woman of ascetic type was playing, a large, robust female was singing with huge



Painting

OPEN AIR SERVICE

enjoyment; her head was swathed in bandage and her face reckless with drink. An elderly man, a type who would be quite at home passing the plate in St. Thomas' Episcopal Church, was simply having a good time with the children under the tent.

Could one call all this a policy of appeasement? A blind force for saving souls? The policy of the good neighbor in disguise? To me it was all a human document, part of the social drama of New York. It may now be that the city and others privately have taken on a large policy of appeasement, that the demarcation of classes is being still more modified, not only in privileges to be enjoyed, but as well in cultural barriers to be overcome. Who can say, then, that "The Mission Tent" has not fulfilled its purpose?



VIRGINIA

Painting



IRENE

Collection of Samuel Golden

Painting



THE MEDIEVAL BALL

Painting

The Haverty Collection, Atlanta, Georgia



ANN
Painting



AFTERNOON ON THE PIER

Painting

AFTERNOON ON THE PIER

A certain recreation pier extending into the East River became a favorite sketching place of mine. There the Municipal Band played dance tunes for the children, in which their elders joined. The children were being taught by a young and attractive girl with blond curls, a wide ribbon left fluttering on either side.

Many afternoons I sketched from the same spot, watching the mothers and children divert themselves, the fathers gravely discuss their problems.

On this pier I painted several pictures, one oil I sent to the Academy. Willian M. Chase, who was on the jury of acceptance, liked it well enough to buy it before it was hung. Later, it received a medal at the St. Louis Exposition.

CORNER MART

Where only a few rough cabins huddled on the endless prairie, mining camps in the west grew like mushrooms after each lucky strike. The magic word Gold transformed the scene; buildings rose up as though put there by expert scene shifters. As in the stock melodrama of yesteryear or the lurid motion picture of today, towns suddenly blossomed out in full activity, with all the excitement of the gold fever. The gold rush ended, the towns shrank; prairie flowers grew again where the gambling palace had lived its glamorous days.

At Pitt and Rivington Streets, I was to witness a parallel to this metamorphosis. It was a quiet little corner, where the neat little houses had their neat little tenants, who spent afternoons fishing in the East River nearby.

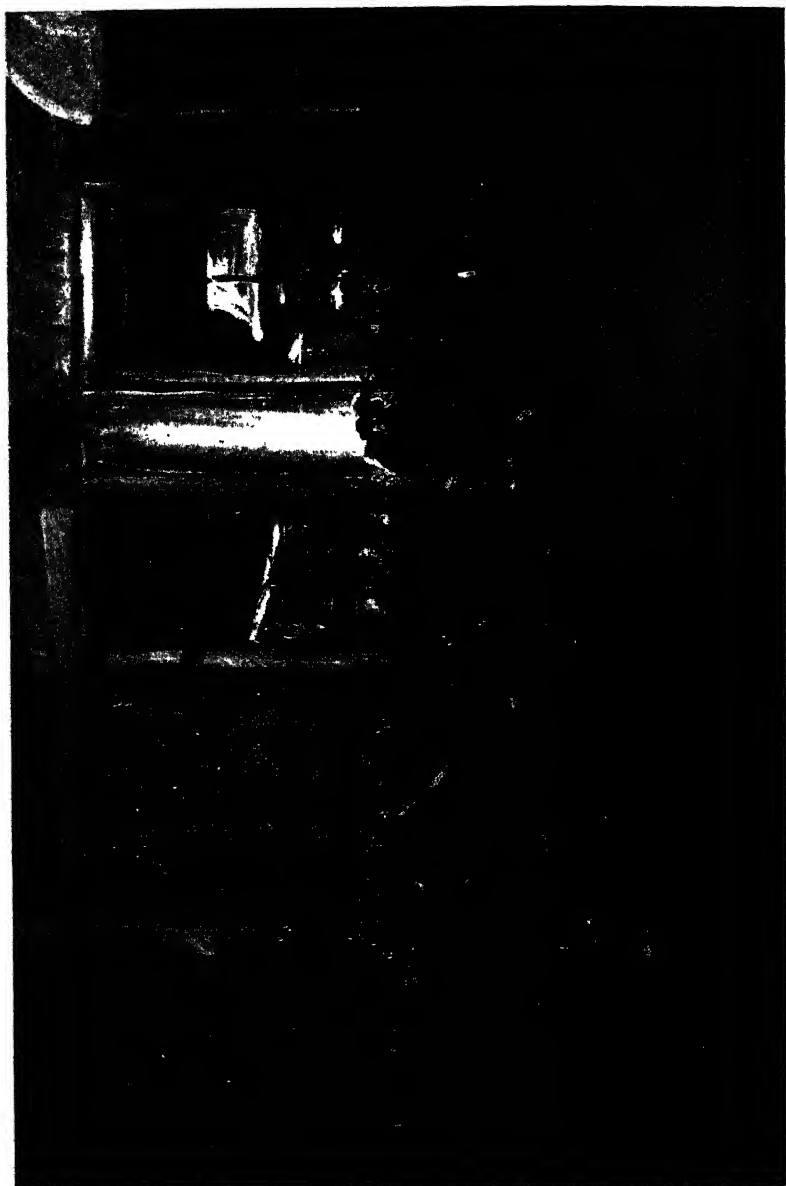
The curb was a market of constant barter, and in the early morning the rush was on. The half-dressed baker, his face white as chalk, came bearing a huge flat basket of fresh loaves of rye bread—a character out of a Russian novel of the underworld. Packed together, neck to neck, people bought and sold from the pushcarts laden with fruits and vegetables. '

Then came the great influx. Suddenly the houses grew taller, shooting up story by story. The little candy shop disappeared, and with it the wooden Indian holding aloft his bunch of gold-striped cigars—vanished as though into the East River. Taking the candy shop's place was a delicatessen store, the signs in Hebrew characters, Kosher meats attested by the rabbi. Chromium juggernauts slowly rolled over the life that so briskly met the dawn. An automobile is now parked where once the pushcart had supported a family, where the everfilled basket of bread had been the staff of life to young and old.



CORNER MART

Painting



CHRISTMAS DINNER
Painting

CHRISTMAS DINNER

Walt Whitman might have written, "Salvation Army, of thee I sing—to the lowly and humble thy drums beat, to them thy message." This army of salvation, whose pulpits are the curbstones of the city; valiant little groups making their picturesque sorties against the Devil, urging, beseeching all to be saved, between the singing of hymns telling their artless tales of how they escaped from the Devil and found Jesus. Going to their headquarters on 14th Street to take notes, I found myself taken note of. A young sister with the face of an angel approached me and earnestly asked if I were saved, did I believe in Jesus—so simple a solution forever and ever, only one word to join the Heavenly Band, to substitute a hymn book for my notebook. And I would cross the River Jordan.

Then came the great annual event, the Christmas Dinner for the Poor. The winter I painted my picture, this charity was held at the Grand Central Palace. Lined up were the old and the young, waiting for their Christmas dinner to be handed them with a cheerful greeting. Seen through a window, the snow lay on a mansard roof. From without, a cold grey light sprayed these faces, offset on some of them by another light from within, the sacred light that Christmas brings.

CITY PLAYGROUND

This city playground facing Varick Street, with Barrow edging it on the north, had once been a local cemetery, as Washington Square is also said to have been. Some beautiful trees still bore out the tradition; but the ground had long since been levelled, and at the period of my sketch, the civic enclosure was dignified by a beautiful stone building with sunken pools, designed by the famous architect, Carriere Hastings.

Scattered around were the little wooden sand-houses for the children to play in, some of them built around trees. In these the children took great pleasure, making pretended sales in which the sand and stones represented sugar and eggs. The mothers brought the babies here in their arms, resting after their household work, while older children brought the smaller tots.

Eventually, in our changing New York, the little sand-houses were condemned as unsanitary. Going much further, the authorities decreed that boys should have more space for their activities; the great American game of baseball was encouraged; and when later I went back to this park, I was shocked to find that the beautiful granite building and the sunken pools had vanished. There was only a bare field, surrounded by wire fence, where two rival neighborhood teams were playing baseball. Even the intervening trees had been uprooted and there was nothing between the bases to interfere with the home runs.

There are other city playgrounds that have suffered the encroachment of wired-in spaces for gymnasium purposes. Seward Park on the lower East Side, and St. Gabriel's Park at Second Avenue and 35th Street have similarly been shorn of scenic beauty.



CITY PLAYGROUND

Painting

Altman Prize, National Academy, 1937



THE FIELD OF JOY

Painting

Collection of The Smithsonian Institute



SAINT GABRIEL'S PARK

Painting



MADISON SQUARE CONCERT

Painting

Collection of Samuel Untermyer

MADISON SQUARE NIGHT CONCERT

Madison Square Park concerts go back to the time of the cable cars, when Broadway and 14th Street was known as "Dead Man's Curve," when the American Art Galleries were still at 23rd and Broadway, and the chaste Diana atop the Madison Square Garden was still a novelty. These concerts were among the first to be sponsored by the city. There was plenty of room for the children to play on the grass; and on the outskirts, boys and girls would promenade, unmindful whether the band played a Sousa March or the *Götterdämmerung*. To the children, it was an occasion to sit with grown-ups and join them in listening, to hear those mysterious sounds that the uniformed musicians blew out of their golden horns, while the leader stood up and waved his arms, holding a funny little stick but never hitting anybody.

Musical culture was rearing its head in our city, and popular concerts were to lead the way to a Toscanini as the then distant star.

THE OLD HOUSE

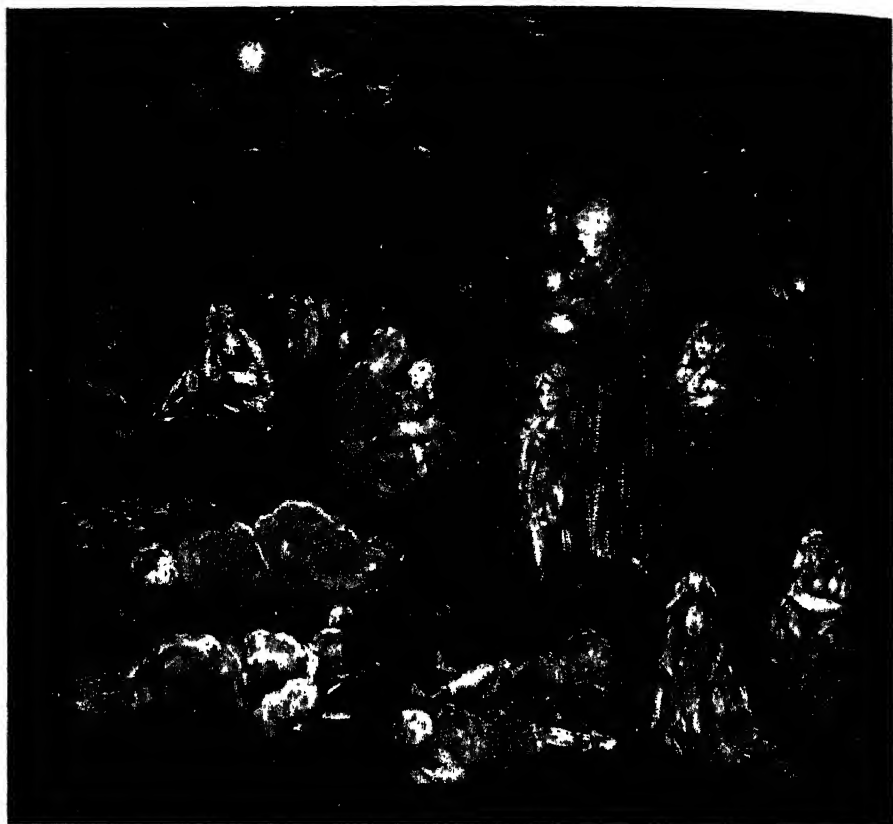
At the corner of Hester and Baxter Streets, hardly more than a stone's throw from City Hall, stood this old frame house, a veteran of 150 years. Although still picturesque, it had been man-handled through generations; only imagination could restore the pristine charm of its earlier days, when the garden bloomed in front, the house was shadowed by tall trees and the colonial stage-coach galloped past the door. It was a prototype of many New York houses, of which this is one of the very few survivors. Successive changes had gradually lowered its character, and in its final decline it became a junk shop. It was later razed, and now a fine public school building has taken its place.

I am glad to have made this record of a New York that is gone. Old houses, with their human associations, always stir my imagination. Europe is proud of its houses that date back through the centuries. Sometimes it is because great men were born in them; commemorative tablets are put up, and the houses become shrines, where we can gaze at the place where Shakespeare lived, where Keats sojourned in Rome, the table at which Goethe wrote. But who—alas!—knows what celebrities might have been born in this now vanished house in New York? Were I a research student, I might dig out the facts; but as an artist, I prefer to let my mind wander over the possibilities, relishing the unlimited choice.



OLD HOUSE

Etching



SUMMER NIGHT

Painting

Collection of The Whitney Museum of American Art

SUMMER NIGHT

A summer night in Corlears Hook, on the East River, on the other side of the Brooklyn Navy Yard; overhead the stars, on the battleship the Stars and Stripes. The heat of the day has turned to the cool of the night. The ocean breezes sift through the bay around the wide curve of the East River, passing over the recumbent forms, East Side forms—men, women, and children, whole families asleep in this vast earthen penthouse of the poor. Not a terraced penthouse on Park Avenue, with its little pines pointing upwards in miniature bravado, an artificial landscape to sleep in, the favored roosting place for aristocratic birds after a night bath in champagne—the morning light to them an event that occurred only to others. Yes, to others—to others still slumbering in Corlears Hook in the light of the dawn. As an onlooker at that early hour, I would watch these sleeping forms, secure in their numbers. Gradually they would awaken, mothers would tend their children, workmen would stretch their arms to another day, rested and refreshed. Here were no derelicts—only industrious people, enjoying their night of cool river breezes, to buoy them up again for the day's work.

EVENING RECREATION

Here again we see families gathering for the cool breath of the East River, by usage creating a makeshift park of their own. A clearing in front of the ferry house, several brave little trees, a few benches—and the inventive spontaneity of the East Side folk, old and young, fills out this civic picture. In those days, before the river highway had nibbled away the picturesque fringe of city life, with its miles of tenements throbbing with life, the docks were swimming holes where the kids of the neighborhood enjoyed the swell from the excursion boats on their way to Providence, Rhode Island.

All this river front has been macadamized out of existence for the automobile highways, and beautified by a riverside parkway system that has sideswiped the gashouse gang and their rendezvous. The harbor police, who formerly had dangerous work poking in and out of dark water holes, now have well-lit shores to patrol, almost as placid as the lakes in Central Park. For these advantages, a wholesale eviction has swept thousands from their moorings. In this picture we see a contented people enjoying their makeshift river park, blissfully unaware that the automobile would soon be whirling continuously over their hallowed grounds, and that the city of tomorrow would engulf them.



EVENING RECREATION

Painting

Collection of Los Angeles Museum

*Painting*

THE OLD QUARTER

Typical and arresting this East Side scene, East of the Bowery, hardly more than a stone's throw from Chinatown. The impress of character creates an atmosphere vital and personal, of a race for whom daily existence mingles the old and the new—from the synagogue to the pushcart, from the barter of the morning market to the holy dinner at evening, lighted by the sacred Sabbath candles. Age has its respect, youth its training. Their daily life is not without humor, aged men deeply mused in the Talmud adding their monotone to the market chorus.



LIFE ON THE EAST SIDE

Painting

Collection of The Corcoran Gallery of Art



ON NINTH AVENUE

Drawing



THE BALLOON MAN

Painting

Collection of Arthur F. Egner



HOLIDAY DINNER

Drawing



THE COURT YARD

Painting

Martin Ryerson Collection



CONCERT IN THE PARK

Painting

CONCERT IN THE PARK

Almost like a forgotten melody, I remember the concerts in the beautiful Moorish casino on the mall in Central Park, its blue dome studded with stars, its fluted columns in gold and arabesque, its sides of terraced ornaments, The blue coats of the musicians form a quiet harmony; in the background, the enormous tuba rises like a golden lily.

Regularly, for hours before the concert, real lovers of music would gather to compete for the first row of benches, passing the time in discussion of their favorite compositions. At that date, to care for Wagner was to have an advanced taste, even to be considered highbrow. The merits of the great masters of music were delicate bones of contention, arguments were drawn out and enjoyed. One elderly couple, to whom these Sunday concerts were a sacred institution, for whom Central Park held memories of courtship days, perused the concert programs intently. To them Rossini was exhilaration, Mendelssohn's "Spring Song" always a tender joy; and when the band played Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony," their cup of bliss was full. When all the seats were taken, standees would make a picturesque fringe; many young couples listened with clasped hands, as though on an imaginary honeymoon dreamily hearing the "Moonlight Sonata." Presto! comes the popular cornet solo, with its rippling notes; while the Wagnerites sit in patient resignation, the soloist blows away to the usual applause and encore.

To these concerts I came year after year to sketch until, imperceptibly, it happened that my favorite old couple came no more. Gradually others began to be missed. Though audiences for music grew larger as the city grew, the dear old days were gone, the days before a button could turn on a masterwork hour on the radio.

EAST SIDE CHILDREN

Just an old brick facade, pierced with a relic of colonial doorway, with broken-down windows framing their human content, basking in the summer air. Even more aged, a small frame house modestly huddles alongside. On the sidewalk, a typical sidewalk of New York, children play, the only blooms that spring from this garden of brick and stone. The passing wind gently stirs their little dresses as it stirs the flowers in far-off fields.

Life at a quiet moment, in a quiet by-street, where the poor carry on, where boy and girl grow up and are married, their children to romp on the same sidewalks. To the artist whose instincts turn to violent drama, this simple facade would become but the backdrop for a night scene of terror: direful figures would come slouching furtively out of the door; an artificial light would flood a window, outlining a hag in a drunken stupor; the children would become little monsters—and another willful sensation would go to an exhibition.



EAST SIDE CHILDREN

Painting

Collection of The Canajoharie Art Gallery



WHARF-END

Painting

Collection of A. A. Versh

THE SAGA OF THE WHARF-END

A Brooklyn background of navy ships, belching factories, church steeples, sugar refineries and docks, the huge excursion steamer, the puffing tugboat close against the wharf, the Knickerbocker ice-boats with their windmill sails. Here whole families came for an evening outing, parking their baby carriages. The men smoked and discussed politics, the women gossiped, the children played. In the evening light they watched the boats go by, singing the popular songs of the day, the old men gathering for a game of checkers. Under the iron canopy sheltering this wharf-end, the great city of New York was in the making; it was a scene more portentous than the landing of the Mayflower, a group more significant than the early Puritans. All the corners of Europe had their prototypes here, in this haven of many tongues.

CHILDHOOD CHARM

Within this oval, dedicated to the spirit of childhood, my dream children are dancing, gaily dancing their charming, impromptu variations; unfettered steps expressing vague impressions, improvising playful fragments.

I know not what fragile observations have deployed into this fanciful arrangement. The theme was my basic motive, the frame made necessary my composition. I fear my little creatures are not familiar with the dances born of the Congo, the dance-hall movements with their violent contortions and disturbing sophistication. As the whim prompted me to decorate this oval with these symbols of childhood, it was more my humor to exempt them from this knowledge, to let them prance innocently for the joy of motion and the sense of play.



CHILDHOOD CHARM
Collection of Joseph L. Morris



Drawing

TEACHER AND CHILDREN

London Bridge may be falling down, or maybe the three little mice are scampering, as the children now scamper around with their teacher on this school playground at Grand and Essex Streets. As they were enjoying release from their A B C's and exercising their little limbs, I had an excellent chance to exercise my flying pencil in this note of the flying little feet of my East Side children.



LONDON BRIDGE IS FALLING DOWN

Painting

Collection of the Delgado Museum, New Orleans



ROCKEFELLER PLAZA

Painting

ROCKEFELLER PLAZA

As our buildings grow higher, our humans shrink; if not actually, at least in artistic proportion by the contrast of mass. Against the towering skyscraper of Radio City, the man walking along becomes a pygmy. To solve this equation of size, I seized the swinging figure of the Gold Prometheus as a foreground motive, thus breaking up the vertical line. Underneath, the gay umbrellas in the decorative restaurant supply spots of color; while above, the playing fountains add movement. Through his size and gravity, as well as through the lines graven around him, the sculptured light giver shames the diners at the little green tables into Lilliputians. His beard flowing over the design, the figure of Prometheus is marooned on that immense facade, the top of which is left to the imagination.

This is my attempt to tame an architectural behemoth, a readjustment affording a mild holiday for an artist's brush; as though Milton's "Paradise Lost" were being scissored down to a mere section, without any hope of "Paradise Regained."

ITALIAN PROCESSION

There is no visual monotony in the religious processions of the saints' days in little Italy as they thread their way through the narrow streets of lower Manhattan. Each one that I saw always had its own spontaneity, its own groupings, a colorful resurgence of devotional enthusiasm.

This I deeply felt as I kept pace with the pilgrims marching to the music of the Italian bands: the children with their wax tapers, the brawny devotees upholding the banners that fluttered in their gay colors, that challenged one's indifference, stirring the emotions even of the casual onlooker.



ITALIAN PROCESSION

Painting

Collection of The Newark Museum



THE MARIONETTES

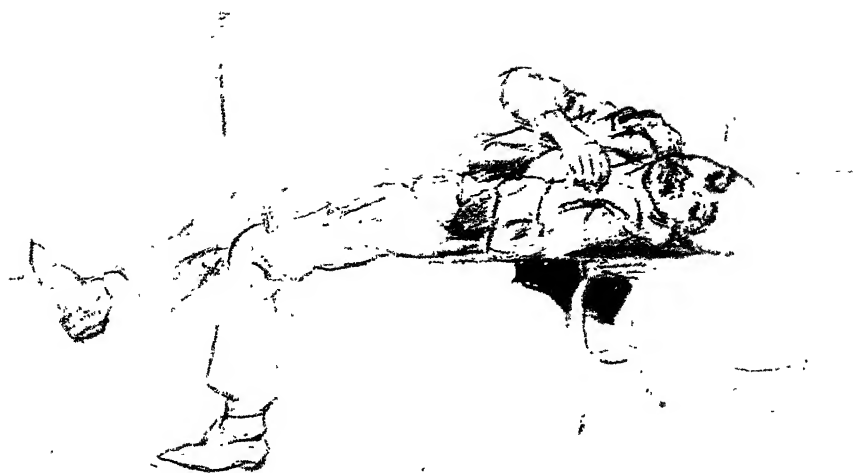
Painting

THE PUPPETS OF ELIZABETH STREET

Years ago, in a dingy store, or even a basement, the painted canvas informed you that the renowned Count Renaldo would rescue the Princess from the Saracens. Inside, the puppets would dangle their combats. Poems of great imagination would be related, long before the wooden face of Charlie McCarthy was wired to amuse the world. When puppets began to multiply, puppet shows went to far corners. The simple Punch and Judy, like the wooden Indian, grew rare. The puppets grew sophisticated. Huge ones invaded the Metropolitan Opera House. The genius of Remo Bufano made them dramatic, heroic. But the shows in the Elizabeth Street cellar had the true spirit of the romances of these classic Italians. Poetry in high design was deeply felt by these New York sons and daughters of Italy, whose home and hearts were here. As I looked on, I could not but be impressed by this spectacle of poetry become life, of life become poetry.

ON A BENCH

It seems strange that in literature it is the unfortunate characters, those who have been battered by the stress of life, who make such interesting reading; whereas in painting, a bum on a bench, depicted with all the unfettered truth, is something that often turns people away. To such a subject the movies can give a glamor, a false lustre; but let him be in a picture, only an immobile figure, prostrate in his rags, and the same people are shocked. The subject gives them a sense of dereliction, vicariously felt; the bum becomes one of them, one they had best forget, that they might the better face the griefs contained in their own lives, keep their chins up without the luxury of abandon. Nevertheless, it is not alone in fiction that such people as those epitomized in this picture can arise to a better day. Even to my own personal knowledge, there are cases of men who have passed through the shadows, to take responsible and honored places; the same bench becoming years later a seat again for the former silent derelict, now sitting with his wife and children in the sunshine.



ON THE BENCH
Drawing



BRYANT PARK BENCH
Drawing

*Painting*

THE TAMBOURINE

Up goes the flying tambourine. Gaily a Sicilian melody is ground out by the organ; the art of music is ground out for the hearts of people at their every-day tasks, for the children who are always responsive to this colorful, tuneful feast.

In this way along the curbstones of New York, the children are brought up on the operas of Verdi, as well as on the popular tunes they can dance to. In their grouping they compose a joyful picture, these little folk who will one day be seen in the gallery of the Metropolitan Opera House, listening to great singers in the operas to which the hand organ introduced them.



O SOLE MIO

Painting

Collection of Arthur F. Egner

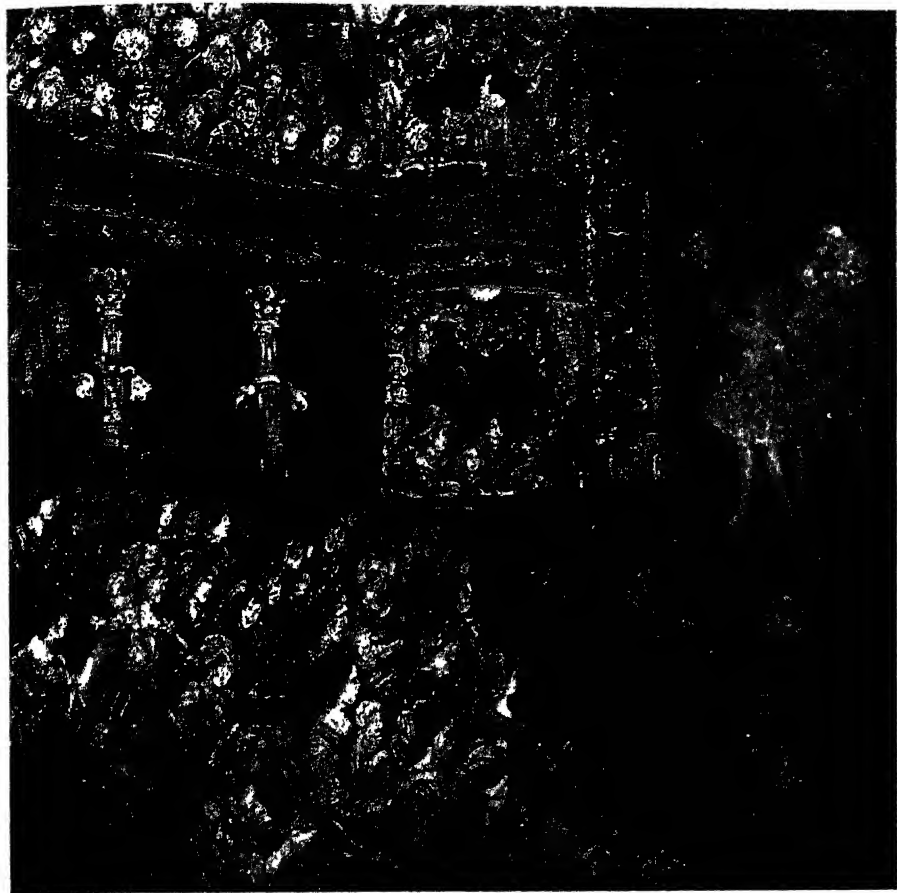


THEATRE INTERIOR

Drawing

THE CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE

It is a far cry from the Paris Opera House, Degas and his ballet girls to the unpretentious little theatre on Third Avenue, New York. In the summer afternoons, children gave their rapt attention to the stage show, their mothers no less innocent in their enjoyment of the entertainment. The many days I spent absorbing this simple subject brought back my childish love for the play, giving it the quality of a real illusion. I was gratified to have this picture invited to the Metropolitan Museum of New York for a loan of two years.



THE CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE

Collection of Julia Peck

Painting



Painting

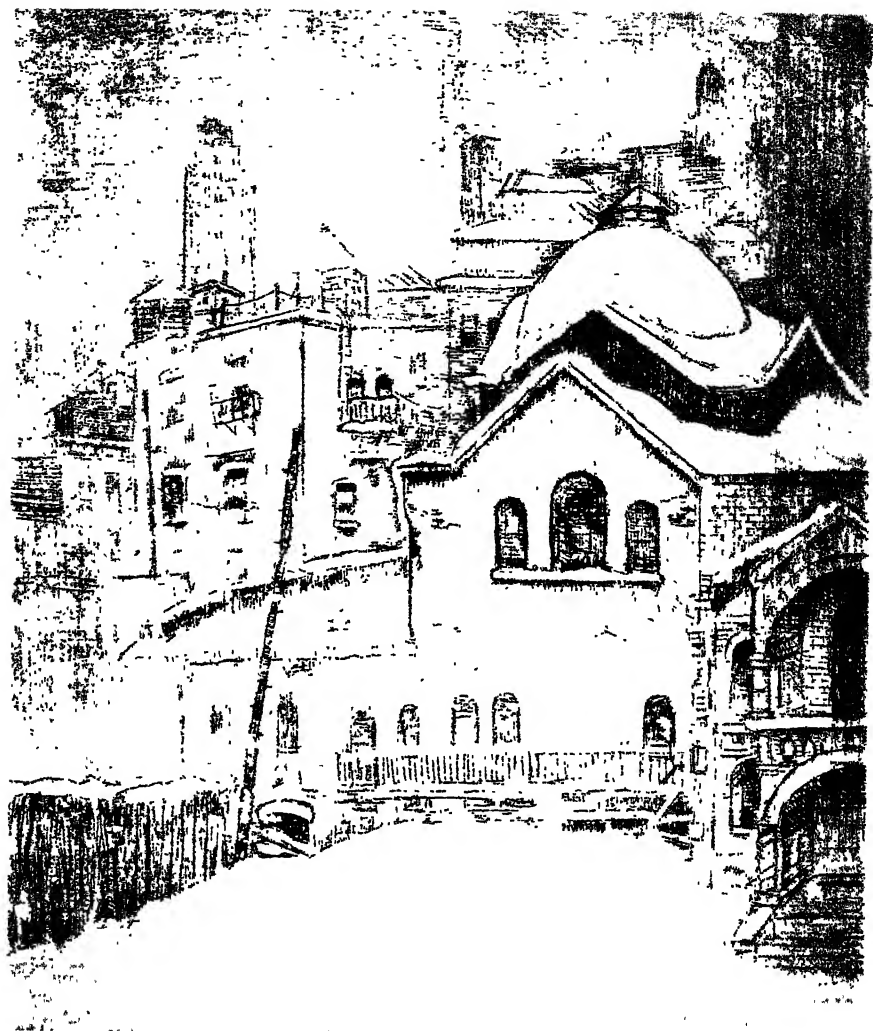
TYPES

In no foreign land were these characters sketched. Under the Third Avenue Elevated, at 59th Street, here in New York, I drew them as I saw them, characters whom Dostoievsky or Gorky might have used in their novels. Five human histories, waiting for a cross-town car to carry them out of sight. But in my sketch they are to be perpetuated for me; a fragment of the city's panorama, to me a human document pertinent and dramatic; to others, casual or significant, according to one's reaction.



MORNING ON THE EAST SIDE

Etching



THE GREEK CHURCH

Etching

THE GREEK CHURCH

The Greek Orthodox church stood on 54th Street just west of 8th Avenue. It had been a Russian Orthodox church and before that a Baptist church. In the adjoining building, which had been a Baptist seminary, the original Roerich School of Fine Arts had its classes. There, too, I had a studio for ten years. From my bay window, overlooking a courtyard, I could look down on the annual religious ceremonies, their significance veiled in antiquity. Next door was the West Side Night Court and before the iron fence of the church there were endless parades of policemen with their prisoners, offenders on bail, while bail bond lawyers darted in and out like vultures even while the worshippers filed in and out of the church.

Now the church has disappeared. The city has erected a fine new Court House to amplify the old Night Court building.

EVENING ON THE PIER

Simple as life itself, these mothers are resting in the late afternoon at their wharf rendezvous on the edge of the East River, the friendly East River with its cooling breezes. The children watch with glee the marine panorama: the constant variety of boats that linger by the wharf or sail to and fro, the lights beginning to sparkle in the distance, the huge spans of the bridges over which the cars move like little mechanical toys.



EVENING ON THE PIER

Painting

Collection of The Phillips Memorial Gallery



CAPRICE

Painting

CAPRICE

In this picture it was my humor to invest my dream people in silks and satins, to place them in a courtly environment, to weave a romance tender and capricious. All in contrast to the hard facts of life, that take us by the throat and choke our visions.

Factual fidelity may yield matter-of-fact renderings, even with sincerity, but without joy and sometimes as dull as they are useless. From such effects the artist has always an escape through fancy, the transfusion of facts in terms of spiritual concepts, in imagination to evoke a caprice.

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